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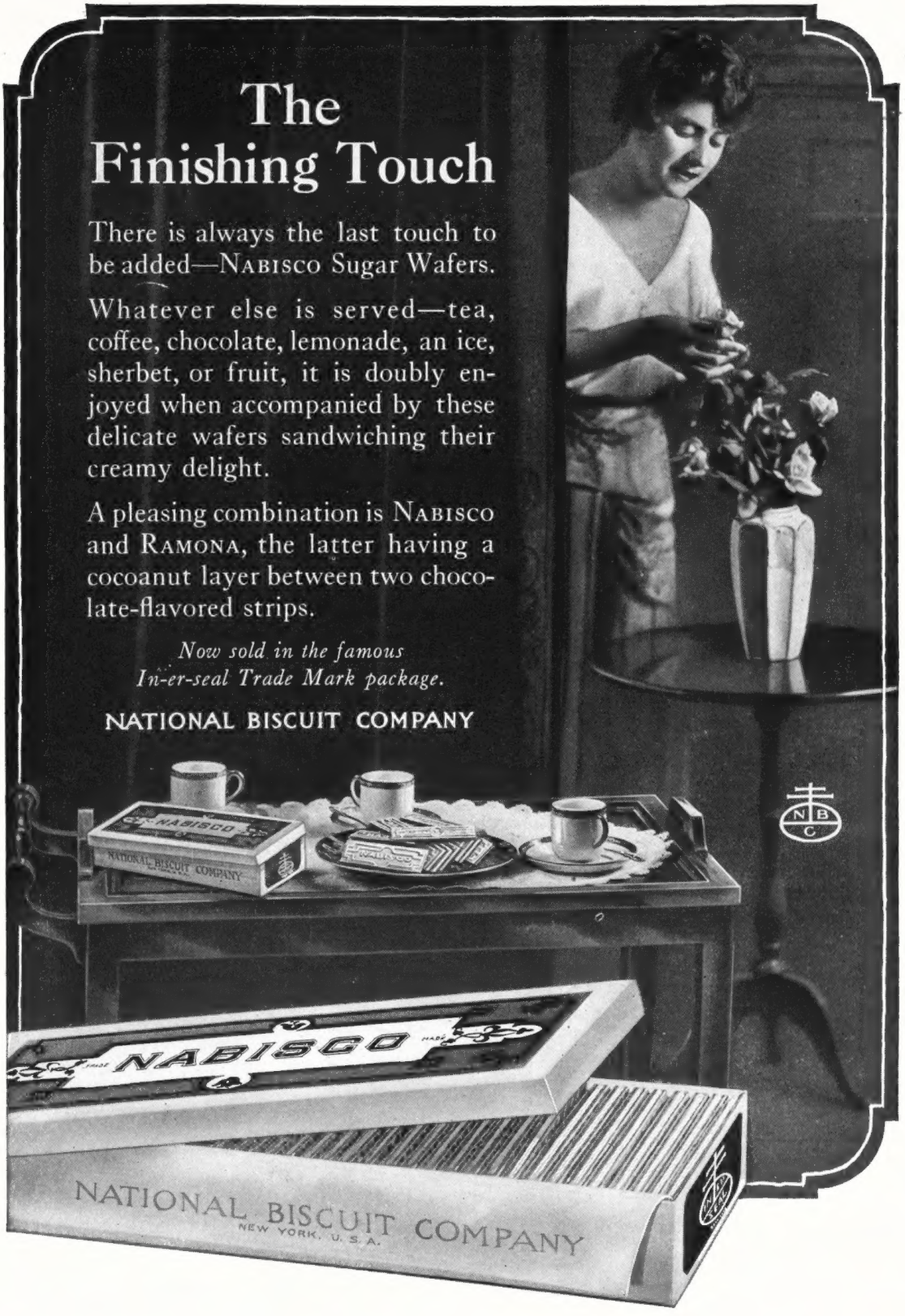

How One Evening's Study Led to a $30,000 Job

A Simple Method of Mind Training That Any One Can Follow with Results from the First Day

By a Man Who Made Formerly No More Than a Decent Living

I DO not take the credit to myself at all for attaining what my friends term a phenomenal success. It was all so simple that I believe any man can accomplish practically the same thing if he learns the secret.

It came about in a rather odd manner. I had been worrying along in about the same way as the average man thinking that I was doing my bit for the family by providing them with three square meals a day, when an old chum of mine, Frank Powers, suddenly blossomed out with every evidence of great prosperity.

Naturally the first thing I did when I noticed it was to congratulate him and ask him what had brought the evident change in his finances.

"Bill," he said, "it's all come so quickly I can hardly account for it myself. But the thing that has made such difference in my life lately began with an article I read a short time ago about training the mind.

"It compared the average person's mind to a leaky pail, losing its contents as it went along, which if carried any distance would arrive at its destination practically empty.

"The leak in the pail, the writer demonstrated, was forgetfulness. He showed that when memory fails, experience, the thing we all value most highly, is worthless. He proved to me that a man is only as good as his memory, and whatever progress he accomplishes can be laid directly to his powers of retaining in his mind the right things—the things that are going to be useful to him as he goes along.

"Well, I was convinced. My mind was a 'leaky pail.' I started in at once to make my memory efficient, taking up a memory training course which claimed to improve a man's memory in one evening. What you call my good fortune to-day I attribute solely to my exchanging a 'leaky pail' for a mind that retains the things I want to remember."

* * * * * *

Powers' story set me thinking. What kind of a memory did I have? It was much the same as that of other people, I supposed. Certainly it never occurred to me that it was possible or even desirable to improve it as I assumed that a good memory was a sort of natural gift.

But I began to observe myself more closely in my daily work. The frequency with which I had to refer to record or business papers concerning things that at some previous time had come under my particular notice amazed me. The men around me who were going about the same work as myself were no different than I in this regard. And this thought gave new significance to the fact that I had been performing practically the same subordinate duties at exactly the same salary for some three years.

The whole thing hit me pretty hard. I realized that probably hundreds of sales had been lost because the salesman forgot some selling point that would have closed the order. Many decisions involving thousands of dollars had been made unwisely because the man responsible didn't remember all the facts bearing on the situation and thus used poor judgment. There are no greater words in the English language descriptive of business inefficiency than the two little words, "I forgot."

I reached a decision. On the recommendation of Powers, I got in touch at once with the Independent Corporation which shortly before had published the David M. Roth Method of Memory Training. And then came the surprise of my life. Within thirty minutes after I had opened the book the secret that I had been in need of all my life was mine. Mr. Roth has boiled down the principles of perfecting the memory so that the method can almost be grasped at a glance. And the farther you follow the method the more accurate and reliable your memory becomes. Instead of study the whole thing seemed like a fascinating game.

The rest of my story is not an unusual one among American business men who have realized the value of a reliable trained memory. My income today is close to $30,000. It will reach that figure at the beginning of our next fiscal year. And two years ago I scarcely made what I now think of as a decent living. I can never be thankful enough that I mended that "leaky pail" and discovered the enormous possibilities of a really good memory.

David M. Roth

When Mr. Roth first determined to exchange his leaky mind for one that would retain anything he wanted it to, it was because he found his memory to be probably poorer than that of any man he knew. He could not remember a man's name 20 seconds. He forgot so many things that he was convinced he could never succeed until he learned to remember. Today there are over ten thousand people in the United States whom Mr. Roth has met at different times—most of them only once—whom he can instantly name on sight. Mr. Roth can and has hundreds of times at dinners and lectures asked fifty or sixty men he has never met to tell him their names, businesses and telephone numbers and then after turning his back while they changed seats, has picked each one out by name, told him his telephone number and business connection.

Send No Money

Mr. Roth's fee for personal instruction to classes limited to fifty members is $1,000. But in order to secure nation-wide distribution for the Roth Memory Mail Course in a single season the publishers have put the price at only five dollars, a lower figure than any course of its kind has ever been sold before, and it contains the very same material in permanent form as is given in the personal $1,000 course.

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Adv. 3-3-20

ADVENTURE
March 3rd, 1920

Published twice a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City. Yearly subscription $3.00 in advance; single copy 20 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Vol. 24 No. 5
Serial No. 149

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"Then one night Mary came to me. 'Jim,' she said, 'Why don't you go to school again—right here at home? You can put in an hour or two after supper each night while I sew. Learn to do some one thing. You'll make good—I *know* you will.'

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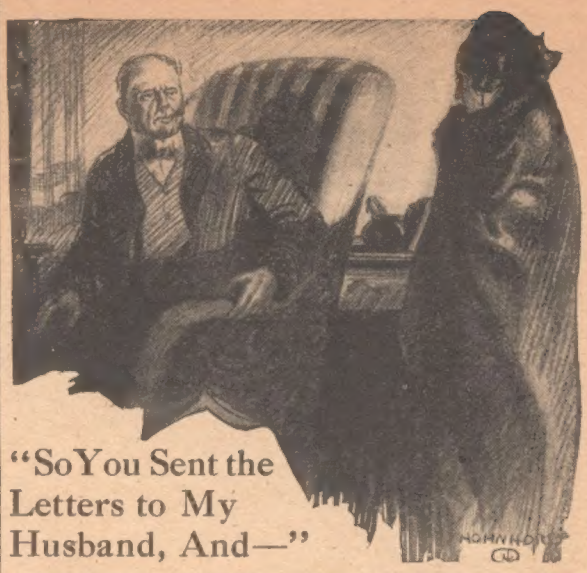

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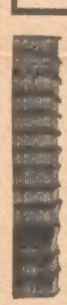

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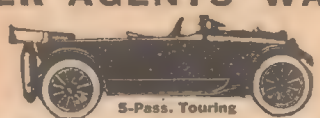

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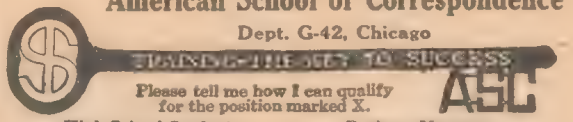

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Vol. 24
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Adventure

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off the Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

HURRICANE WILLIAMS and his satellite, *Dan McGuire*, impress a crew from the riffraff of wildest Australia and set sail for the mid-Pacific island of Dakaru, where lives old *Grahame* amid his gorgeous estates and his pearl-fisheries. This is the start of a series of lawless adventures by sea and land, undertaken in the '70's at the behest of the mysterious Englishman, *Davenant*, and the woman who purports to be his daughter. The opening instalment of "Wild Blood," by Gordon Young, a four-part story beginning in the next issue.

OUT of the frying-pan into the fire. *Coomer Ali*, discredited "prophet," who is attempting escape from the vengeance of his Mohammedan dupes, is cooped up in the chain-locker of the steamship *Shahjehan* en route from Calcutta to Rangoon and the Andaman Islands, with his outcries no more reaching the deck than do the squeaking of the rats in the hold. And no sooner is his release effected than the cyclone bursts. Then the ship's mate obtains aid from an unexpected quarter. "The Pa-Adventures of a Prophet," a complete novelette by S. B. H. Hurst, appearing in the next issue.

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March 3, 1920

The Singing Monkey

A Complete Novelette by Charles Beadle

Author of "Witch-Doctors," "Captain Tristlam's Miracle," etc.

CHAPTER I

UNDER a sky that looked like an inverted bowl of asphalt the S. S. *Hesperus*, with her bridge and forecastle glimmering like the whites of the eyes of the trimmers in her holds, squatted sullenly beneath a coal-tip in Barry Dock, the waters of which were like a stagnant pond covered with black slime. At each roar following the tilting of a truck she appeared to shiver with disgust as if impatiently indignant at the return, after her war record, to her common lot in commercial life.

From behind endless lines of black trucks a rackety cab throbbed fussily beneath the filigree of metal girders, and disgorged on to the puddled stones the figures of a man in a black overcoat and high-crowned derby hat, and the slim figure of a girl whose scarlet hat and green cloak were as incongruous as a parrot in a field of dingy sparrows. Hopping daintily from one dry patch to another and dodging the sooty drips from the overhead rail-track, she made her way, carrying a light grip, on to the grimy gangway.

As she reached the rail a young man in a pea-jacket, whose only recognizable features were his blue eyes, hastened from the break of the bridge toward her as she descended the short inboard ladder and, raising his peak cap with grimy fingers which held a tally-book and pencil, proffered and withdrew the other hand.

"Sorry, Miss Kelvett!" he said, showing the gleam of teeth like a negro. "I'm mighty dirty. Let me take your bag."

"Oh, thanks! Never mind; it's quite light," she replied, smiling. "Isn't it awful? When d'you think we'll sail?"

"Afternoon tide, I expect. Afternoon,

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sir!" he added, saluting the captain following the wake of his niece.

"Evenin'! H'm," grunted the Old Man, regarding the coal-shoot. "Haven't finished yet? The agent promised for noon."

"I know, sir; but they're finishing No. 4 now."

"Um. Mr. Selwyn aboard yet?"

"Mr. Selwyn?"

"Yes, yes. Young Selwyn, the owner's son. The owner told me he was to come the trip with us."

"No, sir; haven't seen him yet."

"All hands aboard?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tugs here?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right!"

As Captain Kelvett trudged across the gritty iron deck after his niece the coal-grimed second mate stood watching until the slender figure had disappeared beyond the chartroom on the bridge. Then with a grumbling sound that sounded like a curse he returned to his post, lifted a flask to his lips and, scowling, chalked down another truck-load in the tally-book.

Down in the small saloon Vivien took off her cloak with a sigh of disgust.

"Pouf!" she snorted as she removed her hat and shook her bobbed black hair. "The place is like a passport office!"

"Can't help it, Vi, dear," responded her uncle, extracting the ship's papers from a small black bag. "Can't open the ports until we're clear of the coal-dust."

"Oh, ——!" ejaculated Vi, ex-W. A. A. C.

"Vi, dear!" expostulated the Old Man. "I wish you——"

"Rot, uncle!" retorted Vi, laughing. "You're pre-war. We fought for liberty—which includes women, you dear old thing. Now I'm going to change and go on deck for some air and coal-dust."

SHE literally dived into her cabin off the saloon, to emerge ten minutes later in a khaki shirt and a blue reefer jacket, smoking a cigaret.

"Oh, uncle," she called from the companion stairs, "what's this creature like?"

"What creature?" asked Captain Kelvett, looking up from the ship's papers on the saloon table before him.

"Mr.— Oh, the owner's creature."

"Oh, young Selwyn? I don't know. Only met him once or twice in the office. Young, rather oversmart; looks a bit—um—a bit too fond of the grog. As a matter of fact that's why they've sent him for a trip, I think. Didn't say so, but——"

"Oh, what a rotten thing to do! This isn't a Keeley's institute, is it?"

"No, but— My dear, I didn't know he was coming until yesterday and—well, you know; he's the owner's son."

"I see. Lashings of boodle."

"Vi, dear, I wish you——"

But his protestation was drowned in the roar of coal pouring into the ship's hold. On deck Vi mounted on to the upper bridge where, protected more or less from the clouds of coal-dust, she could smoke and watch in comfort.

Vi was looking forward to an amusing trip. Since being "demobbed" she had suffered a little from the effects of pneumonia contracted in France. This had prevented her renewing a medical course afforded by a small income inherited from her mother. The doctors had ordered her to take a sea-voyage, and fortunately her uncle could give her what her purse could not pay for.

In a feminine way—for even the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps hasn't taken the "fem" out of the word—she wondered idly what sort of "creature" the owner's son would be. Usually, she knew, officers and engineers of tramp steamers are not very interesting from a social point of view, although campaign experience had eliminated many little snobbish frills from her system, besides teaching her to smoke and to say "——" with her red lips instead of with her mind.

In the matter of "——" and tobacco there was probably more than a suspicion that the tendency to an excessive use of both drugs was due to a suppressed desire to show all and sundry, particularly ancient maiden ladies of England and the sentimental youths—if any remained—that women were free and equal wielders of the vote. Yet the handling of women had really taught her self-reliance and initiative just as much as leading men teaches a man, and in the knowledge of that she gloried; a type of girl who had discarded forever the ghosts of the crinoline and corsets of the savage Victorian era.

But to her uncle, who had been through the horrors of submarine war, in which he had been torpedoed twice, she had remained

what he had always considered her, a madcap child—only possibly a little bit worse than ever!

AS IS often the case the agents were wrong and the second mate right. Within an hour the coal tip ceased to belch "black diamonds" into the capacious hold of the *Hesperus*, and two hours later a procession of beings, who might excusably be mistaken for negroes, emerged from the dusty bowels of the boat for the shore. Immediately afterward the dock pilot, who had been passing the grimy hour or two over a grog in the saloon after the manner of pilots, ascended to the bridge in company with Captain Kelvett.

The grizzled mate took up his position on the fo'c's'l' head and the second went aft. Men cried, tugs panted and fussed, the telegraph tinkled below in the engine-room and slowly the biscuit-box shaped hull of the tramp veered across the stagnant dock.

"Don't seem that young Selwyn is going to turn up," remarked Captain Kelvett to his niece, who was interestedly watching the maneuvers of warping out.

"Perhaps he doesn't take kindly to coal-dust and rain," she responded. "Don't blame the dear."

"Oh, you won't say that when we're outside the roads and get washed down, Vi," retorted the Old Man, who, like any sailor, was apt to take umbrage at any insult to his ship however ancient and humble she be.

"She certainly wants her buttons burnished!" replied the military niece. "Never mind, uncle," she added, laughing. "I'll admit I didn't look pretty myself as a rooky doing fatigue. Oh, look at that funny little tug casting off or something. Why, she or it or whatever you call 'em looks exactly like our colonel. She puffed in that identical asthmatical manner."

As soon as the blunt bow of the *Hesperus* was free of the other vessels along the dock-side the horny hand of the pilot summoned her own power. Cautiously she felt her way through the narrow passage of the lock-gates, waggling her tail in the absurd self-satisfied manner of the deep-laden tramp to the shouting of the harbor master. Just then she was hailed from the wharf. There a young man in a Homburg hat and coat, and carrying a cane, seated on a valise, waved his hand languidly.

"There's that fellow Selwyn," muttered Captain Kelvett.

Vi eyed the distant figure appraisingly.

"Looks quite a lad," she commented.

"Um. Why the —— he can't come aboard like a gentleman instead of a drunken fireman I don't know," grumbled the Old Man as he irritably pulled down the handle of the engine-room telegraph. "Stopping the way on her an' all, confound the man!"

As the port quarter of the ship crunched the fenders against the quayside the fashionable young man shouted hilariously to the second mate to lend him a hand. The grimy young man stared at him and bade him in rude terms to seek a warmer climate.

"Are you the 's'cond'?"

"I am," snapped the second mate.

"Well, put over a gangway at once," commanded the stranger arrogantly. "I'm Mr. Claude Selwyn."

"Mr. Carnell!" bawled the captain from the bridge.

"Aye, aye, sir!" responded Carnell.

"Throw Mr. Selwyn a rope ladder. He's coming aboard."

"Aye, aye, sir," mumbled Carnell, throwing up his hand as a signal that he had understood the order.

A handy rope ladder was accordingly thrown over the quarter, and up this Mr. Selwyn proceeded to climb none too agilely. As he approached the rail the grimy Second held out his hand courteously to assist him. As Selwyn grabbed he apparently forgot that he could not hold his cane and the hand at the same time.

The former slipped and fell into the dock. With one leg cocked over the taffrail the owner's son stopped and treated the odd loungers on the quay and the attentive people on the boat to a fluent flow of words that would have raised the envy of the proverbial trooper.

"Look here," interrupted the Second sharply before the epic was concluded; "you cut that out, mister."

The owner's son regarded the filthy-looking object in front of him and desired to know in the name of the alleged abode of an alleged person whom he thought he was talking to.

"That's all right," responded Carnell curtly. "You may be the owner's son, —— knows, but anyway you're going to keep your mouth shut when women are about."

"Women, by ——!" exclaimed the other, cocking the other leg over the taffrail. "Where?"

"On the bridge—the captain's niece," retorted Carnell sharply. "Get inboard; we're casting off."

"So there is!" ejaculated the owner's son, looking up toward Vi on the bridge. "What luck!"

He jumped to the deck, gave a tip to the loafer who had followed him with his valise, and, turning to the Second, added—

"Just bring my bag along, will you?"

The Second glanced at him briefly from head to foot, turned away and held up both hands, calling out to the bridge—

"All clear, sir!"

Gingerly as if suddenly conscious of the filth from which he had derived so many pleasures in life Mr. Claude Selwyn picked his way amid the coal-strewn deck, mounted the ladder to the upper bridge, and, glancing curiously at the figure of Vi, greeted the Captain hilariously:

"Hullo, cap'n; here I am. Thought I'd join the old tub after all."

"Very kind, Mr. Selwyn," muttered the Old Man, frowning unconsciously. "Um. This is my niece, Miss Kelvett—Mr. Claude Selwyn."

"How d'ye do," greeted Mr. Selwyn, sweeping off his hat. "Awfully glad to meet you."

VI REGARDED him slowly over the top of a cigaret. She saw a man of about thirty who was rather pouched under the eyes, with a prinky nose and a tight, hard mouth decorated by a military-trimmed mustache.

"Really?" she drawled.

"Oh, aren't you?" he queried insolently.

"I reserve my decision," she retorted, smiling.

"Begad, a *Portia* on a tramp!" he responded. "I'm awf'ly glad I came. Oh," he added, glancing aft; "that bally fool's forgotten to bring my bag along. I say, cap'n, will you send some one along to fetch it? And by the way, did my stuff come aboard all right?"

"Half-speed, Mr. Fellows?" inquired Captain Kelvett of the pilot. "Half-speed it is! What's that, Mr. Selwyn? Oh, yes. I'll send a man along as soon as we're clear of the gates."

Claude Selwyn frowned annoyance, turned aside and remarked to Vi gaily:

"So we're to be fellow passengers! I'd no idea I was going to be so bally lucky. The gov'nor insisted, and to tell the truth I kicked like—er—the devil. A fellow never knows his luck though; what?"

"Possibly."

Vi leaned over the rail, paused and, as if relenting and wishing to be sociable, added—

"D'you live in Cardiff?"

"Lord, no fear!" ejaculated Selwyn. "Awful bally hole."

"Really? I was born there," commented Vi coldly, regarding the cold green seas of the Bristol Channel.

"Oh, I say! —— it all, so was I for that matter," responded Selwyn. "But you know some Johnny says that there are only two things a chap can't choose—his parents and his place of birth."

"Most true and most unfortunate," agreed Vi, turning toward him. "Personally I regret that I'm not the daughter of a millionaire aristocrat and a cobbler's daughter—which would probably be the best chance for a genius."

"A genuis! Well, I am or will be a millionaire," retorted Selwyn, whose mustaches, which were rather like a tortured yew-hedge, were twisted to one side. "And——"

For a fraction of a second Vi's big green eyes grew larger; then she took the cigaret from her lips and laughed.

"Quite so," she responded gaily. "But—" she paused in mockery of his manner—"you're not an aristocrat."

He stared at her for a moment. Both sides of his hard mouth curved.

"That's so," he admitted. "My father was a shipping-clerk on the wharf over there; but he's got the goods."

"Possibly," retorted Vi. "But the third generation, you know——"

"*Noblesse oblige!*"

"Quite true," agreed Vi, "but you learned that phrase in school and not from your mother."

A shadow of anger passed across his eyes and the thin mouth tightened as he said—

"Maybe; that's not democratic."

"Yes, it is," she countered swiftly. "A true aristocrat—true, I said—has drawn *noblesse oblige* in his mother's milk and the proletariat has learned to work from the

same source; but you're neither fish, flesh nor fowl! Have you a match?"

"I beg your pardon," he murmured as he held a match under the shelter of the dodger.

"Thank you. Ah," she cried as the ship courtesied to the swell outside the gates, "how glorious is that!"

"That's another rough fact," he replied, grimacing.

Vi laughed maliciously. At that moment came the commotion as the Channel pilot came to relieve the dock-pilot and the ship slowed down to drop the latter. With the former came the second mate, Carnell, to begin his dog watch.

"I say, you!" exclaimed Selwyn as soon as he saw Carnell. "Where the ——'s my bag?"

Carnell eyed the owner's son from head to foot slowly.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said distinctly.

"Where's my bag, confound it! I left it with you aft there."

"I haven't the remotest idea of what you're talking about," Carnell replied casually. He glanced at the captain's niece and on to the pilot, to whom he repeated—

"Stop it is, sir!"

Vi had caught the glance, the accent and the expression. She turned aside to smile. In response to a summons from her uncle Vi followed him from the bridge. When they were in the saloon Vi remarked—

"Who's that second mate of yours?"

"Good Heavens, Vi, I don't know," responded her uncle, and added as if in explanation:

"He only signed on this last trip. Seems a decent chap, capable, and that's all I care. Don't like this other bumptious young man though."

"Don't you? I think I rather like him. I love a scrap; and he's so funny!"

With which feminine remarked Vi dived into her cabin.

CHAPTER II

FOR nearly a week the squat tramp swabbed off the marks of her trade, wallowed and plunged through cold green seas and stinging rainstorms. Vi, who after one day of uneasy emotions regarding food had proved to be a good sailor, spent most of her time on the upper bridge wrapped in oilskins, inhaling stores of tangy ozone into her injured lungs. Down below amid the creak and groan and swish Mr. Claude Selwyn lay wedged in his bunk, cursing his father for having sent him; cursing, too, the ship, the sea, the sky and the pussyfooted Chinese steward who waited upon him with numerous bottles of champagne which the owner's son had provided for his plutocratic pleasure.

"You cussee too muchee," Chi Loo told him softly many times. "You savvee man cussee too muchee s'ip go for die one time."

"Be glad if the —— thing did anyway," moaned Selwyn. "Get out, you —— —— chink, and don't talk so much! Here, come back, you! Open another bottle, savvee? Oh, Lord—*urrgh!*"

Once indeed Selwyn sent for the captain and irritably ordered him to put into the nearest port. Captain Kelvett regretted that he was unable to do so and advised him to go up on deck. Whereupon the owner's son wanted to know with many adjectives whether the ship didn't belong to him, and threatened to have the master sacked if he didn't obey. Captain Kelvett smiled indulgently, urged him not to drink so much champagne and left him.

When the *Hesperus* was wallowing off the coast of Portugal with a half-gale from the sou'west on her squat quarter Selwyn did struggle to the saloon table with the fiddles on, looking very white and wan. But the sight of Vi eating with the gusto of a sea-whipped appetite sent him scuttling back to his bunk peevishly protesting that they were leaving him to die.

The morning Vi spent as usual on the upper bridge, her dark, bobbed hair matted with rain upon her glowing cheeks framed in a yellow oilskin.

"When d'you think we shall be out of this dirty weather, Mr. Masters?" she inquired of the mate, whose grizzled mustaches stuck over a woolen wrapper which always he persisted in using as if he were subject to asthma or some other sedentary complaint.

"'Morrow probably, miss. Soon as we get through the Straits. Feel all right today?"

"All right!" echoed Vi indignantly. "I've been all right right along. Happen to be a good sailor, you know, Mr. Masters."

"Mr. Selwyn there can't say as much,

then. Haven't seen him since we cleared the roads."

"Neither have I," said Vi, smiling. "Except this morning for a moment."

"Nice lad," mumbled the old man, who always spoke as if airing a chronic grievance. "A bit wild. Always was, even as a kiddie. But he's got an eye for the main chance same as his pa."

"You've been long with the firm, Mr. Masters?"

"Thirty years, miss. Started with 'em when old man Selwyn bought his first tramp. James Selwyn it was then, down on Water Street."

"But," exclaimed the girl, "why haven't you got a command by now? Why, it's——"

"Never had the price."

"The price? Why, what——"

"I couldn't ever save—not on a mate's salary. Why, my dear young lady, for every ship there's half a dozen men holding extra-master's tickets. Those as has the money to invest gets the job.

"That's the way of the sea—or nowadays anyway. Always was, I reckon. Worst trade on earth. And yet I dunno. You know you get restless if you stop ashore for long.

"Sailors—some of 'em—are like that. They live a dog's life, cuss —— out of it—beg pardon, miss!—and yet they can't keep away."

"Heavens, I think it's a beastly shame!" ejaculated Vi.

He glanced through the window of the wheel-house at the clock and nodded to the helmsman, who struck the ship's bell. Eight bells echoed an instant later above the swish of the sea and wind from the break of the fo'c's'le head. Immediately afterward the second mate, Carnell, came on the bridge to relieve the mate, followed by a sailor to take his trick at the wheel.

"'MORNING, Mr. Carnell," greeted Vi, looking sharply at the man's features, which, when the coal-dust had been removed, revealed the weather-whipped red complexion of the Saxon.

"Goo' mornin', miss!" he responded with a distinct trace of the "sh" in his speech and, avoiding her eyes, turned his own red-rimmed ones, emphasized the more by the blond lashes, to the compass as he gabbled over the course and standing orders.

The first officer, who did not appear to notice, or to care if he did notice, left the bridge mumbling something to Vi about lunch being on the table. But Vi did not seem inclined for food. She stood pretending to be interested in the tumbling lights of greens and creams, regarding the second mate obliquely while he walked, steadily enough in spite of the heaving deck, to the starboard dodger, where he began to fiddle around with the binocular-box attached to the rail.

Then after a while, as if deciding that the girl was never going below, he entered the wheel-house and bent down as if examining the steam-gear at the back. But Vi caught the significant movement of an elbow and the back of his head. Presently he came out on to the open bridge. His eyes seemed brighter and his actions more sure or perhaps more defiant.

"Beeshly wet weather!" he remarked as he passed her.

"Indeed," said Vi with a quiver of the lips. "I should have imagined that it was exceedingly dry."

His blue eyes held hers for a moment; then he laughed and walked on. At first Vi, who was of a sociable disposition, had met a taciturnity that was broken only by bitter remarks. The first of the mutual interests she discovered which led him to talk at all was of their respective experiences in the war; he of his not inglorious part upon, and frequently in, the water.

At times she had remarked that he became quite loquacious, his talk being interlarded with remarks of more than usual cynical bitterness, and at length she began to understand why. At first Vi was wroth and disgusted. She had a natural loathing for excess of any sort; an emotion strengthened by her slight medical knowledge, and more by her military service.

Yet she saw that he was young, not more than thirty, and from her uncle's remarks an exceedingly capable officer. —— shame, she had muttered to herself; and took pains to show in a subtle manner what she thought.

But that seemed to make no difference to his conduct at all. And Vi realized that he must be a pretty heavy drinker, for although indulgence sometimes affected his speech it never seemed in the least degree to fuddle his brain or his feet. Of course she could not "sneak" to her uncle the captain, as apparently Carnell knew right

well, although he always made a pretense of hiding his cups.

Now Vi had naturally as a woman a strong motherly instinct, and that instinct had strangely enough been fostered by her military experience as an officer of the W. A. A. C.'s, a tendency some people would say to boss one around. As she struggled against this earnest desire to lecture the man—a desire which as a matter of fact she had been fighting for several days—the subject came alongside her and leaning on the rail remarked conversationally:

"Haven't sheen Mr. Shelwyn around lately? How ish he?"

"Haven't the remotest idea!" snapped Vi.

She stared hard at the blunt black bow heaving from the green sea into gray sky and back, wiped a wet lump of hair from her right eye and turned her head.

"Mr. Carnell, why do you drink?"

"Drink!" he repeated as if he had never heard the word. "Drink! Why——"

The blue eyes stared in utter astonishment. Then slowly they seemed to glaze and came that typical Anglo-Saxon expression of blank taciturnity.

"I'm afraid that I don't understand, Mish Kelvett," he said, the gravity of the voice drowning even the absurdity of the lisp.

"You know very well that I know that you drink, Mr. Carnell," said Vi.

"Again you mishunderstand me, Miss Kelvett," he retorted with equal solemnity. "I have always undershtood that drinking—sh—shmoking—ish permitted to any one over the age of twenty-one; or ish it eighteen?"

"That's not the point. By drinking I mean to excess."

"And by shmoking I mean to exshess."

"Really, Mr. Carnell, I may smoke if I choose, but——"

"Quite sho," he retorted and, turning on his heel, walked up the incline of the deck to the starboard corner.

"—— the man," muttered Vi.

But as she clambered down the bridge-ladder she laughed.

CHAPTER III

HOWEVER on the morrow they ran out of the dirty weather and by Tuesday morning were in the sunny Mediterranean. Most of the time Vi avoided the upper bridge during the second mate's watches. Every morning he saluted her politely but made no venture to enter into conversation.

Vi had decided that although she had perhaps exceeded the bounds of etiquette in broaching such a subject he had shown himself a "bit of a pig" in taking her up so curtly, and after all as it was no business of hers he should be allowed to go to the devil or elsewhere in his own way and gait. Yet sometimes watching him, his figure and profile against the sky as he "took the sun" on the upper bridge, a thought did occur that it was a pity to let such a nice boy ruin his career. And strangely enough she did not notice for some while after that the rawness of the eyelids had disappeared and that he did not lisp.

Of course as soon as the *Hesperus* ceased to plunge and roll Claude Selwyn appeared on deck again, wan and pale and rather subdued. Most of the time he lounged in a deck-chair in the lee of the chart-house, smoking cigarets and absorbing champagne at every meal and often between. Vi would lie beside him reading and sometimes chatting rather amused at the growing of the braggadocio in him as his health returned.

"Have some fizz, Miss Kelvett?" he would always say when Chi Loo appeared with the golden-necked bottle. "Rippin' stuff."

Vi accepted until once as she was raising the glass to her lips she caught the eyes of the second mate, who was superintending some men working on an awning near by. Deliberately he smiled. Vi blushed and was furious. She put down the glass.

Afterward, to Selwyn's astonishment, she refused to drink. "—— impertinence," she called it, losing her sense of humor. On the first opportunity she very haughtily returned the usual morning courtesy. Fortunately, she thought, second mates did not have their meals with the captain.

Selwyn's swagger grew to normal. To the captain he was condescendingly familiar, but to the officers he seldom spoke and obviously resented the fact that he was compelled to sit at table with a mere ship's mate; but to Vi he was talkative and very attentive, which rather tempted her for fun to make him fetch and carry for her.

He had had a commission in a Welsh corps, but regarding his movements in France he was so reticent that Vi shrewdly

suspected that the hand of influence had kept him nearer to Paris or Boulogne than to the Flanders mud. However, he knew Paris and London from a moneyed point of view and his flippant descriptions and remarks were amusing enough to pass the time under a sky of blue on a violet sea.

According to his own account he was a bit of a gallant, and of his prowess he was apt to boast to a point beyond the canons of good taste. But to Vi after her shoulder rubbing with the world in the past four years such a small matter seemed rather silly than otherwise. And to tell the truth a small incident led her out of idle mischievousness to rather encourage him, for one afternoon as Selwyn was stroking his tiny mustaches with much gallantry in the middle of an account of life in war-time Paris she chanced to look up and beheld the Second leaning over the upper bridge, where obviously he could not help but hear, with a portentous frown of genuine anger on his face.

"Of all the —— impertinence!" exclaimed Vi, and laughed loudly, a hilarity Selwyn naturally credited to her appreciation of his story.

SO THEY chugged across the Mediterranean and through the Suez Canal. The weather was as hot as the proverbial Red Sea. In the lightest of crash gowns, Vi gave up even reading in the heat. A light breeze was dead astern so that they were denied even the air made by the speed of the tramp.

Selwyn, cursing fluently because there was not an ample supply of ice, tried to bribe Chi Loo to steal some from the cabin ice-chest for his champagne, of which he guzzled exceedingly, ignoring the advice of the captain that wine merely made him feel the heat more than ever.

At dinner one night Selwyn implored the captain and Vi to join him in his cups. The heat certainly was trying. Although the captain refused Vi laughingly consented to have some. Selwyn became more than usually jubilant.

But the Old Man was right. In such a heat wine, particularly sparkling wine, does have an abnormal effect. The grizzled mate, as soon as he had finished his food, apologized and departed to the bridge to release the second. As he entered the saloon Vi was raising her glass to her lips.

"Oh, Mr. Carnell," she cried, her eyes sparkling, taken by a mischievous idea, "have a glass of wine. It will do you good."

"Yes," urged Selwyn hilariously, willing to support anything that Vi should propose, "come along. There's still some left—and anyway we'll have another. Hi, there! You yellow-eyed rabbit! Chi Loo!"

Carnell stood before his seat and eyed them both. Then he looked straight at Vi and said very solemnly and distinctly—

"Thank you very much indeed, Miss Kelvett, but I don't drink."

"What!" gasped Vi, holding her glass in the air in her surprize. "What! You don't drink! Come, don't be absurd."

"I am very sorry, but that is the truth," he repeated gravely, and sat down.

"Come along," urged Selwyn boisterously. "Don't be such a prig."

"Thank you, no, sir," responded Carnell quietly, and began to drink his soup.

As Vi resolutely refused to share another bottle they went on deck. They sat in their usual chairs near the chart-house and smoked, watching the stars like illuminated crystals. Vi was vaguely aware that Selwyn had become unusually quiet. The thump of the engines, the occasional clang of an iron away down in the belly of the ship or the harsh creak of a fireman twisting a ventilator in the vain attempt to catch some air for the stokehole were the only sounds.

Captain Kelvett, in white duck, came on deck. The glow of his cigar seemed like a golden insect attracted by Selwyn's. The Old Man poufed his disgust with the heat, and, remarking, "There's more air up top, I think," mounted the bridge ladder.

"I hope it won't be as hot as this in Calcutta," remarked Selwyn. "But we'll have a good time there. I'll make the beggars turn out and cart us all over India, what?"

"Really?" said Vi languidly. "That will be rather amusing."

Again he was silent.

"I say!"

"What?"

"I wonder if you'd mind if I call you Vi? Do you?"

"I don't care what you call me," said Vi, laughing lazily, "particularly in this heat."

"Oh, don't say that. I mean it, you know."

On her hand, resting on the canvas arm of the chair, his fingers closed. She raised

the hand to light a fresh cigaret. He sighed and began to talk about what he would do in Calcutta again.

The bells of the watch clanged heavily on the hot air. The tall figure in white of the Second coming from his dinner below passed and went down to his quarters.

"I know!" exclaimed Selwyn, suddenly springing with unexpected agility to his feet. "Come along aft. There'll be more air there, and we can watch the phosphorus in the wake. Awfully jolly stuff although I've never seen it. Game?"

"If you like."

Vi hesitated.

"Oh, I haven't enough energy to get up."

"I'll help you!" And, bending, he caught her arms and almost lifted her on to her feet.

"Oh, you are clumsy!" she complained. "You've nearly crushed what blood I've left out of my arms."

"Come on!" he laughed. "I'll carry you all the way there if you like."

"No, thanks. You're too rough."

THEY made their way off the bridge and across the iron deck, which retained the heat of the baking sun, behind the spare wheel-box, and leaned on the wooden taffrail by the log.

"Yes," agreed Vi after a minute, regarding the phosphorescent turmoil made by the propeller, "it certainly is wonderful. And what a funny row that thing makes there every few seconds. The log, isn't it?"

"Yes, I think so," said Selwyn absently.

He moved closer and placed an arm lightly on her neck, saying:

"Oh, look at that fuss over there! Must be a fish or something."

"Where?" demanded Vi, placing a foot on to a cross-stanchion to slide along the rail.

"No, not there. I mean— Vi!"

His arm tightened around her neck and suddenly forced her head back so that her mouth was free to his lips. With a smothered exclamation she tried to turn her head away.

For an instant in a tight grip he held her. Then with a force which surprized him she wrenched her shoulders free and effectively killed an amorous protest with a left-handed swing of the palm on his mouth.

"That for your —— impertinence!" ejaculated Vi furiously.

He slid a foot along the rail, almost losing his balance. For an instant he clasped his hand to his mouth and with a muffled oath launched himself straight at her. Vi was rather off her guard. He caught her around the neck again and under the left arm and forced her backward, muttering fiercely—

"I'll get you, you ——"

The last word was choked as two powerful hands closed around his throat. As he loosed his hold he was lifted into the air and literally flung across the deck into the scuppers. Gasping with rage, Vi nearly turned upon the tall form in white.

"Are you all right?" came Carnell's voice sharply.

"I— You—" spluttered Vi in astonishment. "Oh, thank— How did you come here?"

"I—I came to look at the log," asserted Carnell. "Are you all right, Miss Kelvett?"

"I— Yes, thanks. Oh, thank you very much, Mr. Carnell," she added more quietly. "I—I think the brute's torn my dress. Where is the creature? Oh, you didn't throw him overboard?"

"No, I don't think so. No; here he is."

A quick step on the iron deck brought them round to face Selwyn, who stood with his fists clenched, staring through the darkness to identify his assailant.

"Oh, it's the second mate is it, you ——!" he said. "And who in —— asked you to interfere?"

"I did!" said Vi sharply.

"If you weren't a blooming mate I'd give you the thrashing you deserve, you hound," he continued, ignoring Vi.

"I'm at your. service," replied Carnell in a low voice, advancing a step.

"One does not fight with a common sailor," sneered Selwyn. "I'll have you put in irons, my good fellow, and when we get to Calcutta I'll see you get a few months to teach you better manners, and by —— you won't sail on my ship again. Understand?"

"I'll have you put in irons—" began Carnell when a hand upon his arm stopped him.

Selwyn glared at him and then at Vi and, turning, limped off toward the bridge.

"I had better go now, Miss Kelvett. He won't dare say a word. But I think that I should hand the fellow over to the captain.

He ought to be in irons for this. He forgets the law of the sea."

"Oh, you mustn't do that!" exclaimed Vi, conscious that the man was trembling violently. "He— Don't you see, you may have hurt him and—and I think he was rather drunk too. I shouldn't have come here with him. But I thought—or rather, I didn't think—about it at all. No; please, Mr. Carnell, please, don't say a word; will you?"

"As you wish, Miss Kelvett. Beautiful women have privileges—and owner's sons, too, I suppose," he added bitterly.

CHAPTER IV

VI LAY recovering from the moist excitement in the long chair which she had dragged along the deck. The longer she thought over the incident the more vexed she became with the "clumsy fool," as she called him mentally. He would probably sulk or do something foolish which her uncle would be bound to notice; and worse than that she feared that if he really were such a cad as apparently he had proved himself to be, he might seek to revenge himself upon her uncle through the firm.

When her thoughts turned to the other man she again became vexed. She supposed that the fellow would consider that she was under an obligation to him and therefore that she would have to be nice. Association brought the memory of his statement at dinner that he did not drink. Was he merely swanking? she wondered.

At the same moment she recollected that although Selwyn drank all the time it had never occurred to her to remonstrate with him. Perhaps it was because the one had money and everything life could give him—or rather everything he could take from life—whereas the other had appeared to her to be ruining a career that was necessary to him for his welfare. Yet that was queer reasoning.

"Must have appealed to my maternal instinct," she decided lazily at last, "although I didn't know I had one."

Presently she heard a step and saw Selwyn emerge from the companionway. A dread that he was coming over to apologize to her faded as he deliberately dragged his chair, which was already some distance away from hers, right across in front of her to the other side of the deck. A flare of a match as he lighted a cigar showed a sullenly angry face. Oh, —— the man, she thought. How perfectly dreadful to be cooped up on a boat with a creature like that!

Next morning Selwyn did not appear at breakfast, commanding Chi Loo to serve him in his cabin. Vi sighed when she saw her uncle frown, for the Old Man resented extra work being put upon the steward by anybody who was not ill. After the meal he rose and made for Selwyn's cabin.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Vi. "Now, for it!"

She sat still and listened.

"Good morning, Mr. Selwyn!"

"Mornin'," growled Selwyn.

"Are you ill? Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, there's not."

"Well, Mr. Selwyn, the steward has more than enough to do without ——"

"I don't care a —— what the steward has to do!" snapped Selwyn's voice. "In future I intend to have my meals served in here, whether you like it or whether you don't. This is my ship. D'you understand, cap'n?"

"The ship," came the Old Man's voice quietly after a moment's silence, "belongs to the firm of Selwyn, Meredith & Company, and I am in command of her."

"You won't be long, cap'n!"

"I shall give orders to the steward that he is not to serve you here unless you are ill. Please understand that, Mr. Selwyn."

"You do and you know what will——"

The closing of the door shut off the last words. Captain Kelvett walked across the saloon toward the companion with a wrinkled brow. Vi rushed after him.

"Uncle, I heard. Don't take any notice of the cad."

He looked at her, frowning.

"What's the matter with the man?" he grumbled.

"He won't and can't do anything. He's probably half-drunk and threatening nonsense."

"No, it isn't nonsense, Vi. You don't know. Old Selwyn thinks the world of this boy of his; and after all it's my bread and butter."

"Oh, but they wouldn't; they couldn't, uncle!"

"But they do, Vi. Only the year before the war old Belknap was thrown out of the *Chisholm* to make place for a youngster of

thirty who happened to be a schoolmate of this man here."

"Oh, it's shameful!" exclaimed Vi.

"Perhaps, but it's true. But I can't understand what's made him so sore."

VI HESITATED. If she told him even half the truth he would probably be so enraged that he would lead to a serious row and would put Selwyn in irons if he became violent. No; she had better let the matter rest and hope that the cad would not carry out his threats. Humiliating, but as her uncle said it was his bread and butter.

She spent the morning on the upper bridge with the grizzled mate, conscious of the eyes of Selwyn, who was smoking cigars and drinking a bottle of champagne just below. At lunch he appeared to have thought better of his decision and sat himself next to her in his usual seat. Throughout the meal he would not speak.

Once when the captain addressed him to make polite conversation he stared sullenly at his plate and refused to answer. Vi's anger began to mount until at last she felt that she could not endure the strain and, rising, she apologized and retired to the deck.

She tried to settle down to read in her chair, but presently Selwyn came up and occupied his at the other side of the deck. At length, conscious of his eyes watching her although she had deliberately shifted her chair to show the back, she rose and went on to the upper bridge where the second mate was on watch. He came forward with a camp-stool which she sometimes used, but she refused it, saying she was tired of lying about.

"If only one could get out and walk a mile or so!" she exclaimed. "I'm so sick of being cooped up for so long with—for so long. But I expect you're used to it, Mr. Carnell?"

"Oh, yes; I'm used to it, Miss Kelvett. Got to be, you know."

She noticed a peculiar look in his eyes as he spoke to her and a new timbre in his voice. As he leaned over the rail beside her gazing out to sea she studied his face.

Yes, there was a change in the man. The expression was less bitter. The face was more carefully shaved than usual, without any tiny gashes which told of an unsteady hand; and the blue eyes were bright, the blond-lashed lids fresh and clear.

Again she recollected his statement when they were drinking champagne in the saloon. She considered for a minute and then said quietly—

"I owe you an apology, Mr. Carnell."

"You do?" he queried in surprize.

"Yes. Don't you recollect my impertinent question about—er—drink?"

"Oh! Oh, I had forgotten that, Miss Kelvett. Besides at that time my temper was —well, I might have been rather rude."

"I deserved it," said she, smiling brightly at him.

"Oh, no. I only hope that you will forget it."

"Of course," she assented, stared at the shimmering white horizon, smiled and with a short laugh said:

"I wonder whether you would mind if I asked the same question again? My curiosity torments me so!"

"Certainly. But I don't."

"Don't drink?"

"No. As I said in the saloon."

"But you did then?"

"Oh, yes; certainly I did. I don't think that—I was ever quite sober; and never drunk either, for I can stand a lot, you know."

"You know I can't help—wanting to know everything," smiled Vi. "But—why did you stop?"

Again the peculiar expression came into his gaze; then he turned and looked out to sea as he said casually—

"Oh, well, I just cut it out, as they say."

Vi's expression became serious.

"Well, it was rather an idiotic thing to do, don't you think? I mean in excess. As a matter of fact I can never see the attraction in it nor understand why people do it."

"Don't you?" he smiled at her. "I do."

"Why did you then?"

"I? Oh."

He paused to look at her.

"Well, I'll tell you. I drank deliberately for the reason that thousands drink—as a narcotic—to stop thought."

"You!" she exclaimed. "Somehow I should never have imagined that. You're so—well, young and healthy and—that sort of thing," she added lamely.

"Yes, that's true. But all the more reason."

HE WALKED across to the middle of the bridge, glanced at the compass and down on to the deck behind them and returned.

"How long has your uncle had a command, Miss Kelvett?"

"Uncle? Oh, I don't know. Ever since I can remember, I think."

"D'you know why he got a command?—because merit will seldom bring one."

"Why, what— Oh, yes; I recollect. Mr. Masters told me. You have to invest."

"That's right. Now, if you were a man would you care to live this life of sheer slavery for a pittance for twenty years to gain command of a ship like this where you'd be bound down, tied for the rest of your life? And how long d'you suppose it would take a saving man—not me, by ——! —a saving man to save a thousand pounds out of ten pounds a month? That's what we got before the war. Without money or influence a sailor hasn't a chance—unless he's a crook.

"Look at Mr. Masters. He's a good seaman, doesn't drink, is straight as a die with an extra-master's ticket for nearly forty years. And where is he? That's why I drank—looking at those dreary years ahead."

"But couldn't you—have gone on a liner or something?"

"Overcrowded except for influence. I thought that the war might have brought me a little good, but here I am! That's why I drank, Miss Kelvett."

"But uncle——"

"Maybe your uncle has given up hope like most of 'em. And he's at the beck and call of any little rat in the office or ——"

He did not finish the sentence, but a significant glance behind intimated to whom he was referring.

"Yet now you've given up drink all the same?"

"Oh, well, that idea just came along somehow."

He smiled.

"I saw that I was rather ridiculous and sore about nothing out of the way. Tons of other fellows in the same boat."

"Why don't you leave the sea, then?"

"To do what? The technicalities of a sailor are of little use ashore except for special jobs, which are nearly all found by—well, a friend or luck."

Again he smiled.

"Perhaps my luck will change now, Miss Kelvett."

"I sincerely hope it will," said she.

"He *is* rather nice," she thought later as she descended to the chartroom to have the customary tea with her uncle—although the Old Man always supplemented the tea with a good dash of grog.

To her surprize Selwyn came in and without a word sat himself down. He took his tea, which usually he rejected with a joke, and quietly began to munch biscuits. Uncle and niece exchanged covert glances. Presently Selwyn, who seemed rather scared or ashamed if such a sentiment were possible to him began a subdued conversation with the captain although he did not attempt to address Vi and she studiously ignored him.

When presently the Old Man rose and lighting a cigar, went out, Vi perceived Selwyn's object, for he shot a swift glance at her, laughed and said:

"I say, I'm awf'ly sorry we had that rumpus the other night, only you shouldn't have tempted me. Let's make it up; shall we?"

The insolent manner and phrasing naturally infuriated Vi. She stared at him coldly and rose with her chin in the air. As she reached the door he sprang and caught her arm savagely.

"You ——!" he whispered, his face contorted with rage. "I'll get you yet, and smash your —— uncle as well."

"Let go my arm!" commanded Vi haughtily.

"What a rotten little fool I am!" she reproached herself when, still flushed with anger, she was mounting the bridge ladder. "Merely because I take notice of a beastly little cad I'm going to make poor uncle lose his job."

CHAPTER V

NEXT day came the monsoon, a slapping breeze which curled woolly tufts upon a sapphire Indian Ocean and lessened the tension for everybody from the firemen in the stoke-hole to the mate on the bridge. Selwyn, however, did not seem affected in the least; he adopted an air of outraged dignity which in Vi's eyes would have been funny had there not been the fear, corroborated by uncle and officers, of what trouble an owner's son could produce.

For three days the farce continued. Selwyn spoke to nobody except Chi Loo, who

served him with champagne and cigars from midday to night. Compelled to talk and boast to some one, Selwyn used the Chinaman as a vehicle of expression of his contempt for and loathing of everybody on board "the old tub," as he was so fond of calling the *Hesperus*.

Moods of hilarious idiocy would alternate with periods of sullen temper when he would lean against a rail or lounge in his chair savagely chewing his cigar-butt, glaring either at Vi or at the form of the second mate on the bridge above him. At table he would order Chi Loo to open some canned dainty from his private store, eat a portion and loudly command the Chinaman to finish the rest; then without apology he would leave the table.

At length his crazy humor, nourished on champagne, began to manifest itself through the medium of conversation with his yellow familiar.

"You're the only civilized being on board," he would inform Chi Loo, holding up a bumper of Moët & Chandon, "and when we get to Calcutta we'll go home 'Mail' and by —— I'll make you my butler. How will you like that, my yellow boy, what? Nothing to do but steal my cigars and dance around in a pigtail and a blue gown instead of slaving in those dirty rags on a rotten old tub for a set of coal-tramps, eh?

"And women, bags of 'em! They'll be awful mashed on your slit-eyed melon of a face my boy. Anything for a change. And maybe we'll take in your bally country on the way and have a —— of a time, what?"

"My countly no savvee man allee samee you," Chi Loo would respond blandly.

"What d'you mean, you wall-eyed yellow rabbit?"

"Allee samee I tell you, you cussee too muchee. No good for lie down man cussee too muchee. Plenty tlouble come long plenty quick. I tell you one time all leady. You no wantee listen Chi Loo."

"Rot, ol' dear," Selwyn would reply, grinning. "You go along and open another bottle of the best and don't talk so much."

"All lightee. One time you savvee."

Sometimes Selwyn would insist upon talking about Chinese women in a manner calculated to insult those who, he knew, could not help but overhear. Once Chi Loo, who probably did not understand a quarter of Selwyn's allusions, took offense at his reference to a supposititious Chinese princess.

"You no come 'long my countly," advised Chi Loo.

"Why not, you mandarin you?"

"'Cos you come 'long you talkee too muchee. 'Nother feller come long cut off head plenty quick."

Selwyn roared boisterously with laughter at this statement.

"You no laffee for me," warned Chi Loo without a vestige of expression. "You laffee too muchee I Chi Loo make you dance too long."

"THAT young man wants a —— good thrashing," commented Carnell upon the bridge to Vi.

"Oh, he's drunk," said Vi disgustedly.

"Is that an excuse then?" demanded Carnell, gazing at her with a smile.

"Oh, well," answered Vi, and turned away.

That evening Vi, unable to support the presence near her of the "odious Selwyn creature," as she termed him, fled to the upper bridge, where the presence of a mere male afforded a sanctuary.

Just after one bell, while pondering upon the mischance that had thrown them together and spoiled what might have been an interesting sea-voyage, she noticed that the glow of a cigar beneath the bridge was still there. However, she was too much worried over the possible effects that the man's malice might cause for her uncle to have any inclination to sleep.

"Good evening, Miss Kelvett. Not turning in yet?" asked Carnell.

"No, I don't feel at all sleepy," she replied.

"I'm very glad to hear it," responded Carnell in a low tone and, turning away, repeated the course from the mate, who in turn, as eight bells clanged out, retired to his watch below.

When the new man had taken over the wheel the Second came and leaned beside her on the rail, where she was still engrossed in her musings, watching the phosphorescent glimmers of the sea hurrying toward the infinity of the horizon, lulled by the rhythmic throb of the engines against the hum of the monsoon through the halyards. After a while of silence he said in the same low voice—

"Miss Kelvett, I wonder whether you understand how much I owe you?"

"W-what?" stammered Vi, startled.

"I—er—said that I wondered whether you realize how much I owe you," he repeated a little uncertainly.

"'Owe you'—me? What— I'm afraid I don't understand. What can you owe me? Rather I owe you for—defending me or——"

"Oh, no, no, please. That never entered my head," he hastened to say with a note of distress in his voice. "I merely meant— Oh, don't you understand what gave me the impulse to—give up the drink?"

"Why, you told me—" began Vi.

"Yes, yes; but a fellow doesn't, you know. Unless—there's something—somebody who—well, makes life worth while."

"Oh!" gasped Vi. "I never dreamed——"

"Of course not. You wouldn't. But I just wanted to tell you that—that— Well, I know I'm only a second mate, but sometimes one can do far more when——"

"Oh, Heavens!" stuttered Vi. "Please don't! I mean I can't— That is— Oh, what have I done!"

He made a sound like an animal that is hurt.

"Oh, please, Mr. Carnell, don't!"

"All right, I won't," he replied. "I can't expect— Perhaps I am a little sentimental. But—" He stopped and turned his head away slightly. "I must tell you one thing, and I'll never refer to it again. I just want you to know that—I love you."

"Oh, why, why!" exclaimed Vi, taken with an impulse to scream with laughter. "We might have been such good pals, and——"

"I'm sorry," he said humbly. "I apologize. I won't offend again."

"Oh, please don't!" said Vi. "I mean— Oh, I don't know what I mean. I think I'd better go to bed."

"As you will," said he quietly. "Good night."

"Oh, yes; good night!" exclaimed Vi, and rushed for the ladder.

As she reached the deck, trying hard to suppress the impulse to laugh, a glow of a cigar confronted her and Selwyn's voice said:

"Miss Kelvett, I have been a cad and I really want to apologize sincerely, I——"

"Oh, go to the devil," squealed Vi in agony, and ran across the deck for the companion stairway muttering:

"Oh, —— men! What on earth did I ever come on the beastly boat for? One wants ——"

The end of the sentence was amputated by a motion that sent her into a dive beyond the door of the companionway, sprawling across her own chair. As she scrambled to her feet, wondering what had happened, the ship seemed to shiver and lurch to port. Instantly the mate's whistle screamed shrilly. She heard running feet and the voice of her uncle shouting—

"Vi! Vi! Where are you?"

She was conscious that the deck was sloping strangely. Queer noises were issuing from the depths of the ship and the engines appeared to have gone mad. She ran toward the bridge ladder, shouting to her uncle reassuringly:

"All right, uncle. I'm all right."

"Keep near me," he commanded from the bridge.

The Second dashed past her and disappeared. The patter of rushing feet sounded in the darkness. A bellow of steam began, nearly drowning the shouting of orders. Cool and quiet, she remained on the bridge suppressing a desire to ask her uncle what the matter was. A white form appeared beside her.

"For God's sake, what's the matter?" yelled Selwyn above the noise. "A mine?"

"Yes, I think so," shouted Vi calmly.

AGAINST the violet darkness of the white-smudged sea she could make out that the forecastle of the ship was at a sharp angle and much nearer the water.

"It's blown the bows off her," she thought, "and she's sinking fast."

Figures of men seemed running aimlessly beneath her. She saw one boat hanging out in the davits. The Second rushed up the ladder, yelled something at the captain and leaped down again. Captain Kelvett took her by the arm and shouted in her ear:

"She's going, Vi. Don't get excited. You haven't got time to get anything. Follow me."

"Oh, right, uncle," returned Vi calmly. "I'm coming."

On the deck beneath, which was tilted heavily, she followed her uncle to the port

side. A boat surrounded by a crowd of jabbering men was hanging outboard. Carnell suddenly appeared at her elbow.

"Here, Miss Kelvett, let me lift you!"

"No, no," shouted Vi; and, catching hold of the falls, she slid into the boat, in which there were already several men. Almost on top of her came Selwyn.

"Are you all right?" she shouted. "She's going fast. Look out!"

The boat tilted and swayed and tipped bow-downward, nearly throwing them all into the sea; rocked and hit the water with a splash. Fortunately it was the leeward side. Amid shouts and yells the men tried to fend her off from the black, roaring hulk above them. Others swarmed down the falls.

"Uncle, where are you?" screamed Vi as shrilly as she could. She thought that she heard him reply, but at that moment came another terrific roar.

"Cut her off!" screamed Selwyn. "Her boilers are blowing up."

Some of the crew had oars out and were pulling and pushing frantically. One block had been loosened. Some one cut the other tackle. Vi saw against the sky that everybody had disappeared except one figure sliding down the falls. She grabbed at the block as the boat began to make way, screaming:

"Wait! Wait! The captain's coming!"

But the men either did not hear in the uproar or were too excited to attend. Vi hung on desperately to the block at the end of the falls and shouted to Selwyn beside her to hold her. He caught her round the waist.

For several seconds the two bodies held the strain of the men rowing and the tug of the boat under the sea. Then the captain half-slid, half-tumbled into the boat.

Vi let go and collapsed in a heap in the bottom of the boat. As they sorted themselves out the crew were pulling vigorously. As they made way from the lee of the ship the boat began to tumble about in the seas.

"The fools smashed No. 4 boat," said Captain Kelvett, manipulating a steering-oar and watching his command wallowing low in the water. "And I'm afraid the chief and the engineers have gone. She must have ripped her bottom right out. She went as quick as the *Titanic*."

"Was it a mine?" queried Selwyn.

"No, no. Derelict. Probably a waterlogged wooden wind-jammer sunk by the Huns. Are you all right, Vi? Hey, who's there? Bo's'n?"

Several men echoed the word.

"Ain't 'ere, sir," responded one. "'**'Chips'** is 'ere."

"Well, some one get a lantern and step the mast. Can you see any of the other boats?"

"One over there, sir," said another man. "Ow!" he yelled. "There she goes!"

Looking back at the *Hesperus*, they saw her apparently try to stand on her tail against the sky. A burst of fire came from her funnel and as she began to slide backward a dull roar reached them.

"Just got away in time, by ——!" remarked Selwyn.

"Now you savvee one time you cussee too muchee," commented a voice in the gloom.

CHAPTER VI

AFTER some difficulty Chips, the carpenter, lighted the boat's lantern. Two of the men stepped the mast and rigged the small lug-sail while the others rowed to keep her from broaching to the seas. The captain held a roll-call. In spite of war training, which nearly all the men had had in one form or another, they had not mustered to their proper boat stations, so that instead of a correct crew there were only five men and the steward.

As the boat got way on, the captain came about and began to tack across the spot where the *Hesperus* had gone down. As they came up in the wind they saw a glimmer of a light from the other boat. When they were within hail the voice of the second mate reported to the captain:

– "Seven men and myself, sir. The mate's boat capsized. I think she must have been rushed. No survivors found yet. 'Sparks' went with them."

Sparks was the seamen's nickname for the radio operator. The suddenness of his death precluded the possibility that he had had time to send off any wireless appeals for help.

At that moment a man in the bow shouted that they were approaching something in the water that looked like a man clinging to a piece of wreckage. They dragged on board a fireman, who said that he had been in the mate's boat, which, as the Second had just suggested, had been overcrowded in the general confusion and capsized. For some

time the two boats beat about with their lanterns lighted, finding no trace of any other survivor.

"But they can't all have been sucked down with the *Hesperus*, could they?" queried Vi.

"Mebbe, and mebbe—sharks," said her uncle grimly.

He tacked over to the other boat and, ordering the second to keep as close as possible, turned and ran before the wind. Then the captain had an examination made of the food-supplies and water. The keg fastened in the middle of every boat and supposed to be kept constantly replenished, a matter seldom attended to in tramps before the war, proved to be only three-quarters full and leaking.

A case of emergency rations was missing. Whether in the general confusion it had been lost overboard or whether it had been omitted by the mate whose duty it was to see that it was placed there, they could not know. The captain said nothing, but in the light of the lantern Vi saw his face become very grave until a meek voice murmured apologetically—

"Chi Loo catch um some, but not velly muchee."

"Not velly muchee" for nine mouths was true, but at any rate the seven-pound tin of biscuits, a ham and apparently an apronful of canned goods snatched at hazard were better than nothing. The water was the more serious problem. Captain Kelvett immediately ordered all the food to be placed in the locker of the stern-sheets on which he sat, and a man was specially told off to guard the precious keg in such a position that the drips would fall into the bailer.

"Are you all right, Vi?" queried her uncle when at last the men had been divided into watches.

"Yes, uncle. But where are we making for?" questioned Vi.

"Andaman Islands," he replied.

"Oh. How far from land are we now, then?"

"Ssh!" warned the captain in a low voice. "Nearly two thousand. Unless we pick up a boat that means ten days with the breeze—if it holds."

"But can't we make for Africa, cap'n?" inquired Selwyn.

"No. Can't attempt to beat against this monsoon although it's so much nearer; and besides there's no likely port from Djibouti to Mombasa."

"But haven't we enough food?" began Selwyn.

"There's no need to discuss that yet, Mr. Selwyn," put in Captain Kelvett. "We're sure to pick up a boat. We're more or less right in the shipping lane. Now you'd both better try to get some sleep before dawn."

DESPITE the hardness of the thwarts and the excitement of the catastrophe Vi was lulled by the heave and sinking sigh of the boat running before the breeze. She awoke to stare in bewilderment at a triangle of sepia against a glare of crimson cut by a swaying line of sapphire. Below this mass developed slowly the head of a man with an enormous mustache above a garment which insisted upon being a woolen nightshirt, as was conclusively proven by one hairy leg. The leg projected over a rim of white upon blue and a fantasy of bodies sprawling in a confined space which heaved in rhythm with the crimson world. An excruciating pain in the center of her spine insisted upon recognition.

As swiftly and as crudely shadowed as a picture upon a screen, reality returned. She was made conscious of the actuality that she was pillowed within the arms of Selwyn, staring bewilderedly at the profile of her uncle against the pallid stars of retreating night.

"Don't!" she exclaimed sharply and sat up.

"Well, your uncle's steering and you were falling off the thwart," he said sharply.

She stared at him, noticing the unshaven jaw and dirty face, the expression of which seemed somehow to have changed, to have become more serious with a hard line, savage, around the mouth. The boat was still running before the breeze to the steady seethe of the foam behind her, toward the crimson glare, which was rapidly changing to pallid gold. Save for the other boat to the south, there was nothing beneath the vast bowl of the sky.

Two thousand miles, her uncle had said—ten days; and a shudder of apprehension shook her as she recalled the state of the larder and water-supply. Stories of shipwreck and the sufferings of abandoned sailors clamored at her mind. But that

nervousness passed quickly, for her mind had been dulled to horror in the past five years.

She smiled and, feeling in her pocket, she extracted a cigaret-case, to find five left. This time she really did sigh a pang of despair. However, she proffered one to Selwyn—one can't continually snub a creature whose arms one has been lying in in an open boat, she reflected—and lighted one herself.

Presently she noticed that the other boat was coming up on a tack to cut across their bows. As she grew near she could see the fair head of the second mate in the stern-sheets. Sweeping round, he came up under their stern and was presently running level. Carnell reported that all so far was well, but to a further inquiry responded:

"There was about a cup of water in the keg, sir. Leaked out. And we haven't any provisions at all."

The lines on the captain's forehead contracted. The men began to mutter among themselves and to stare at the eight occupants of the other boat. Selwyn looked at the captain and then at the mate and scowled. They all appeared to be awaiting to hear what the Old Man had decided, although they knew.

"Mr. Carnell."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"You're much faster than we are. We'll board you and abandon this boat. Come alongside."

"Very good, sir."

"Eh!" burst out one man immediately. "Wot's the —— e's up to?"

"Be quiet there," commanded Captain Kelvett. "When Mr. Carnell comes alongside you men will board the other boat one by one. You hear? Chi Loo, hand biscuits and food each time. Savee?"

The small, dark man who had been the first to grumble looked ugly, but as none of his mates seemed inclined to back him up he sat quiet. Each time the Second's boat surged alongside Chi Loo and a man threw aboard cans of meat and two or more of the men scrambled over.

When Vi's turn came, to her annoyance the Second handed the tiller to another man and stood up to catch her as the two boats bumped. She protested, but he caught her deftly and set her down.

The captain was the last to leave, putting over his tiller and leaping most agilely for his years as his boat swerved away. With a feeling of regret Vi saw the abandoned boat yawing wildly to the wind and sea. Like two alien herds of animals in the same cage, the men of the captain's boat, which, thanks to Chi Loo, had the food, seemed deliberately to huddle apart from the others, as if they had never been shipmates. Of these symptoms both the captain and the second mate were aware.

In a whisper the latter asked the former whether he had a gun with him. The Old Man, like every one else, had been forced to quit the ship in the utmost haste and so had had no time to retrieve the weapon from the drawer in his berth where he habitually kept it.

Carnell glanced gravely at Vi. Selwyn moved restlessly and scowled. Some of the men began to mutter among themselves, but beyond grumbling and anxious looks at the horizon they made no protest. After Chips had calked the seams of the leaking water-keg with some oakum, which fortunately he had in his pocket, the captain apportioned a ration of food and water to each man while the Second steered.

BEFORE the war, in the British merchant marine the stokers and sailors—deck-hands rather than the sailors—were for the most part composed of all nationalities; but now there were very few foreigners. The little dark man, one Gregory, was a sea-lawyer, the one who in almost any crowd is apt from divers motives, sometimes from merely a cussed strain, to cause trouble. When the captain made the rationing of food and water Gregory did not make any open protest, but began in the manner of his kind to grumble and argue with his mates. Carnell, knowing the type of man from experience, and knowing, too, the danger he was in emergencies, roughly bade him to hold his tongue. Gregory obeyed, but in a sulky, vindictive manner.

After each man had received his share the captain proffered his niece another ladle of water. Vi refused. The captain insisted and Carnell urged her. Vi turned upon them both.

"You're doing this because I'm a woman, I suppose, uncle?"

"Well, yes, dear. But it is right that you should."

"It is nothing of the sort!"

"But, Vi——"

"But, Miss Kelvett—" Carnell began to protest.

"For how long have you enough water for all hands?" demanded Vi.

"Oh, we may pick up a boat at any minute," returned Captain Kelvett evasively.

"May! May!" snapped Vi. "In future I have half the ordinary food ration and the usual water. These men want more food and water than I do; I've got a smaller system to keep going and they may need all the strength they've got to row if the wind gives out, and you know it."

"But, Miss Kelvett—" began Selwyn.

"I was not addressing you, Mr. Selwyn," retorted Vi quietly. "You are not an officer. Oh, why on earth," she added, made angry at the expression of admiration in Carnell's eyes, "can't you understand that the day of the harem is past and done with!"

"Ain't she a plucked 'un!" commented one of the men, chewing canned beef and biscuit.

Indignantly Vi stared across the tumbling waters.

"Oh!" she cried, raising herself on her knees. "Look! Look!" And, pointing to the southeast: "A ship! A ship!"

And against the golden glare of the rising sun was a tiny black spike.

"A ship! A sail!" echoed the men.

"I believe it is!" ejaculated the Old Man; and one of the men, swarming up the short mast, cried—

"And a steamer, sir; a steamer, sir!"

Pulling the boat round a couple of points to the south, the captain ran straight for her, hoping against hope that she was not on a southern course, in which case they would probably never succeed in overtaking her or getting close enough to signal. However, within half an hour her funnel and two masts were distinct under the steel plate of the sun.

"Queer," remarked Carnell about ten minutes later. "She's broadside on, sir."

"That's so," admitted Captain Kelvett.

In another quarter of an hour they could distinctly make out that she was a fairly big boat—about ten thousand tons or more.

"She must have broken down," remarked Carnell.

"Yet there are no signals," commented Selwyn.

"Oh, mebbe just nothing serious," suggested the Old Man.

"Or perhaps she's seen us!" suggested Vi.

"Oh, no, dear. She'd steam toward us if she had. Anyway we'll know in a few minutes."

As they approached Carnell, who had the keenest sight, made out a green star on the black funnel.

"She's a Leonard & Black; Green Star Line; Liverpool, Calcutta and China ports."

"Undoubtedly broken down," commented the captain.

"—— good luck for us!" commented Vi.

There certainly was something wrong, for the great bulk lay broadside to the wind, disdaining to acknowledge the monsoon by the slightest roll. Closer in, Carnell reported that he could not distinguish anybody on the bridge.

"Good God!" exclaimed Captain Kelvett at last. "She looks like an abandoned ship! If these were in the Hun pirate days I could understand it; but—now?"

They came down to windward of her, ran close alongside without discovering a sign of life from the forecastle to the poop under the awning. As they swooped under the stern with the names "*Monsoon*, Liverpool," enscrolled on the counter, they hailed in unison:

"Ahoy-o! *Monso-on* aho-o-y!"

Not a vestige of movement of any sort.

"—— queer!" muttered the old man. "Mebbe bit of a job to board her. Well, unreeve that tackle and use the halyards. Out oars, men!"

WHILE the men pulled laboriously against the wind the Second arranged the tackle and the boat's anchor. Under the leeward side of the counter he succeeded in getting the makeshift grappling-iron caught in the poop-railings at the third attempt and swarmed up, followed by half a dozen of the men.

"Send one of the men to get a rope ladder," commanded Captain Kelvett. "See if she is abandoned and report."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

The men scattered over the silent ship. Presently one came hurrying back, dragging a rope ladder.

"Can't see no one, sir," he reported. "Seems queer, it do that."

As Vi clambered on to the long bridge

amidships, which was broad and fitted with benches and a few deck-chairs as if she carried passengers, Carnell hurried up to the captain and spoke rapidly in a low tone with a grave expression.

"All right," assented Captain Kelvett, and, turning to Vi—

"Wait here a moment, dear."

"Why?" demanded Vi.

"I won't be a minute," added her uncle, and without waiting hurried after Carnell.

"What on earth's all this mystery?" exclaimed Vi, and very naturally followed them down the companionway with Selwyn at her heels. By the door of the saloon Carnell heard her and turned abruptly, crying:

"Oh, please, Miss Kelvett! Go back!"

"Nonsense!" ejaculated Vi.

"But it isn't fit for——"

Impatiently Vi pushed him aside and entered the saloon, inside the door of which Captain Kelvett stood staring.

At the head of the dining-table a man with a gray, pointed beard and mustaches in the uniform of a ship's captain was sitting with his head buried in his arms. On one side of the table in chairs were two men in white duck, a stout woman and a child; on the other side upon the locker-cushions were three persons and a young girl with a mass of red hair; and each and every one was in the same position.

Vi thought that they were all praying. Yet who would pray amid the litter of a breakfast table? She had just noticed that the yolk of an overset egg was a spot of color on the white cloth when she realized the truth—they were dead.

CHAPTER VII

"VI!" PROTESTED her uncle as the girl, realizingthe situation, stepped swiftly toward the table intent upon investigation. Beside the *Monsoon's* captain at the head of the table she bent and, as callously as a hospital nurse should, moved the head slightly in order to look into the eyes, which showed slightly the whites, as one overcome by sleep. The other victim revealed the same symptons. Touching a cheek, she found that they were cold, yet by the density of the overset egg-yolk and the condition of the bodies in that warm, moist climate she knew that death had not been long master in the saloon.

Turning to make a remark to the three men, who were grouped around her, as if unconsciously accepting the leadership of the woman, she noticed something that brought her forward quickly. On the locker-seat, between the young girl and a woman who possibly might have been her mother, was a vacant seat, in front of which were the beginnings of breakfast such as the others had—a cup of cold coffee, a piece of toast with a corner bitten off and two untouched eggs.

"Look," she said to her uncle. "Some one was sitting there——"

"Oh! Do you see that?"

She pointed to the white table-cloth, where, faintly marked, was an imprint of a shoe, across which lay a fork with the handle bent.

"See! He must have been in such a hurry that he kicked over an empty egg!" she added, indicating some broken shells upon the floor.

"Better leave them for the moment," said her uncle, and turning to the Second commanded:

"Mr. Carnell, take a couple of men and examine the men's quarters and I will go through the captain's berth and try to find the log."

"Very good, sir," replied Carnell, and departed.

"And, Mr .Selwyn, would you mind telling the carpenter to go round and sound the wells?"

Selwyn hesitated, frowned, said ungraciously, "All right," and hurried off. Uncle and niece entered the first cabin on the right of the saloon. Skirts and dresses were hanging in the small wardrobes and women's articles were lying about the locker-seat and on the dressing-table.

On the port side they found a larger cabin, which was evidently the master's. Captain Kelvett did not find the log there, but noticed that the two chronometers were still going.

"Probably find the log in the chartroom," he commented as he mechanically rewound the chronometers.

"There doesn't seem anything suspicious here," remarked Vi. "Appears as if he had his bath and gone in to breakfast. Let us go on deck and see what has happened."

As they passed through the saloon they started at the sound of a sharp *pop*. Captain Kelvett rushed toward the pantry,

where they found Selwyn, with a satisfied grin on his dirty, unshaven face, in the act of pouring out a bottle of champagne.

"Nothing here," he remarked casually. "Steward seems to have left everything O. K., though. Have a drink?"

"Mr. Selwyn!" exclaimed Captain Kelvett sharply. "This is no time for drinking. Please come on deck."

"Oh, isn't it?" retorted Selwyn. "I'm —— dry! Haven't had a drink since I left the old tub."

"Will you kindly come on deck?"

"No, I won't," retorted Selwyn, putting down his glass and looking at Vi. "This isn't your ship anyway."

"Don't take any notice of the man, uncle," said Vi, turning away disgustedly, aware that the tension between them which had been automatically slackened during the stress of immediate danger had been renewed.

Without comment Captain Kelvett turned on his heel and followed Vi. The second mate had not yet returned from his search. They went along the broad wooden deck and entered the chartroom, which was, as customarily, beneath the bridge. In a drawer the captain found the ship's log-book. Skipping over the ordinary entries regarding leaving port, he turned to the last; but he gained no information, for it was merely the record of the course, wind and weather, written, he observed, on the previous night, proving that that morning the castastrophe, whatever it was, had occurred.

"QUEER," he commented, closing the book. "Let's see what is in here."

He forced another locker-drawer and extracted the usual water-proof cylinder containing the ship's papers.

"Phew!" he whistled, rapidly running over them. "This is a rich prize! General eastern. Silks and spices, you know, Vi. Queer nobody took the manifest with them!"

While waiting for the Second and the carpenter to return he mounted the upper bridge. The trigger on the dial of the engine-room telegraph still pointed to full speed. In the wheel-house he found that although there was no force of steam the pipe was still warm.

"Now the wireless," added the captain, and hastened along to the operator's cabin. "—— it!" he exclaimed, standing and looking at the machine. "I don't know how to work the thing, but there isn't any juice anyway."

"That's true," replied Vi.

Nothing in the room was disturbed; the records and copies of the operator lay about on the desk, and a pen lying beside them suggested that the man had recently left.

"Perhaps he was killed?" suggested Vi.

"Mebbe. Anyway here's the second. Well, Mr. Carnell?"

"Had a Lascar crew, sir. They've abandoned the ship. Three boats gone. The chief, two other engineers and a young fellow who looks like the wireless man are lying in the messroom dead. Funny; they were evidently at breakfast, too! No sign of life anywhere. Engine-room and stoke-hole evidently abandoned on the jump. Fires unraked and still warm."

"H'm. And you, Chips?" to the carpenter, who had come up with a sounding-line in his hand.

"About six inches in No. 4 and about two or three in the others. Dry as a bone, sir."

The captain looked at his niece, who looked at Carnell.

"Can't make head nor tail of it, sir," said Carnell.

"Neither can I," admitted the captain.

"Those people seem to have been gassed or chloroformed," said Vi slowly.

"Chloroformed!" echoed her uncle. "But how? They were at table. The smell would be there."

"The skylight and ports are all open, sir," suggested Carnell.

"Well, I don't know," said Vi, "but that's what they look like. I've seen chloroform effects often enough, the Lord knows, and—Or gassed—not chlorin, of course."

"Well, whatever it was they've left us a fine ship," remarked Carnell, looking about him appreciatively.

"By Heavens, yes," assented Captain Kelvett as if suddenly seeing a new point of view. "She's general eastern too, Mr. Carnell. You'd better get the boat inboard. Send a couple of the most reliable men to search her right through and report.

"And then we'd better get under way. Wait. Do you know anything about the wireless?"

"No, sir," said Carnell, shaking his head.

"H'm."

Captain Kelvett pouted his lips.

"Well, we'll try and turn these fellows into stokers."

"One of them is the donkeyman, sir."

"Good. He ought to know enough to get steam on her anyway. Oh, and Mr. Carnell!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Better get those bodies removed as soon as possible."

"Aye, aye, sir; I'll attend to that."

"But I want to see them again," exclaimed Vi.

"But, Vi, dear——"

"Don't be idiotic, uncle," retorted Vi. "We haven't even examined them to see what they really have died of. You can't hold a post mortem by looking at them. I'll go now."

She descended below forthwith, followed by her uncle. Vi approached the bodies arranged in such solemn sleep around the table and handled them with the dexterity and proper callousness of the trained nurse, watched by her uncle, who seemed as unable as ever to realize any professional utility in a woman.

"I thought," remarked Vi as she left the dead captain, "that perhaps they had been poisoned, but this stout man here hasn't yet touched his food; and notice, uncle, he hasn't received his cup of coffee."

She examined again the footprint upon the table-cloth, but failed to gather any suggestion. After raising the eyelids of the dead girl, who had been about fourteen years old, she exclaimed and pulled back the muslin sleeve upon the arm.

"Come here!" she called to the captain. "Look! Isn't that a human bite?"

The captain stared at the semi-circular blue marks upon the cold white flesh.

"Certainly looks like it," he assented. "Yes; it couldn't well be a dog. But how could that——"

"Don't know. Seems to me that they've been drugged by some suffocating medium. We must find out what has done these poor souls to death. Get me some scissors, please. What's that?"

A noise of bottles being moved sounded. The captain walked over quickly and looked in the pantry, where he discovered Chi Loo busily investigating the cupboards.

"Oh, Chi Loo," said the captain. "Where has Mr. Selwyn gone?"

"No see Mistle Sellyn," responded Chi Loo, continuing his work.

"But we left him here. You must have seen him. He hasn't come on deck."

"No see Mistle Sellyn," repeated Chi Loo blandly. "P'laps he cussee too muchee."

CHAPTER VIII

ALTHOUGH Vi was in her second medical year when the kaiser interrupted her studies, and the campaign had afforded her some further practical knowledge in gas, wound, and shell-shock cases, yet she was hardly qualified to make a diagnosis on a mystery that might well have puzzled a specialist; and moreover she had learned by precept and practise not to attempt such a hazardous performance.

"Can't make out what it could have been, uncle," was her verdict. "Seems, as I said, to be a case of poison by some suffocating agent. But that bite puzzles me. I can't discover any similar abrasions on any of the other bodies."

"Well, dear, perhaps we never will. The sea holds many mysteries that will never be solved by man. And anyway we've got to look after the living."

"That's true, but it worries me. What's become of Mr. Selwyn?"

"Nobody appears to have seen him. Chi Loo says that he followed us down and that there was nobody there."

"Seems queer," commented Vi. "He can't have got drunk in such a short time even if he hadn't had his normal amount of food yesterday; and if he has, where could he have gone?"

On deck Carnell met them.

"The donkeyman seems to know enough to act as engineer, sir," he reported, "so I've divided the other men into watches of six to act as stokers, and you and I, sir, I thought to take the wheel. We'll be able to keep one boiler going."

"Very good, Mr. Carnell," assented the captain.

"But, uncle," exclaimed Vi, "I know enough to keep the ship on the point you tell me unless there's a storm or something, and that would free Mr. Carnell, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, dear, but——"

"But nothing! I can do it easily."

"Well," demurred the captain, "perhaps you might, but anyway a ship may pick us up."

"But you don't want one," expostulated Vi, looking at Carnell and recollecting both their stories. "This ship's a valuable salvage, isn't she?"

"Oh, yes; she certainly is," admitted Captain Kelvett. "But, Vi, we don't want a tow. We would merely borrow enough men to stoke her properly."

"Oh, well, then I hope we do!" exclaimed Vi. "Now, Mr. Carnell, please sign me as an A. B. or whatever you call it."

"I don't see why she shouldn't," concurred the captain.

"Good ——!" exclaimed Vi exasperatedly. "Won't you permit a woman to have the intelligence of an ordinary sailor? Is it so terribly difficult to twiddle a wheel this way and that and see that the ship's bow keeps on the compass-point?"

"Miss Kelvett's perfectly right, sir," said Carnell.

"H'm, I suppose so," assented the conservative old man. "All right, Mr. Carnell. Get steam on as soon as we can—but we'd better do this disagreeable job first, I think. I'll try to find a prayer-book in the late captain's cabin. Oh, by the way, have you seen Mr. Selwyn?"

"Mr. Selwyn? He went below with you, sir, when we came on board."

"Haven't seen him since?"

"No, sir."

—— "queer," murmured Captain Kelvett.

"Perhaps he met Chips, sir, and has gone exploring the ship."

"Mebbe. Mebbe."

Chi Loo proved his Oriental appreciation of the vital truths of life by providing a most comfortable breakfast in the chart-room. For the men occupied in preparing the dead he also set out an ample meal from the stores of the *Monsoon*. Afterward the captain, standing bareheaded by the gangway platform, where a plank had been suitably arranged, read the burial service and in solemn order the dead splashed into their ocean grave.

Then, each expressing a human emotion by a sigh of relief which even the war had not removed from the heart of man, the crew divided up and the first watch descended into the stoke-hole with the donkeyman to serve as amateur stokers. As the uncle and niece waited on the upper bridge for the first revolution of the propeller, scanning the tumbling infinity of water, the carpenter appeared to report.

"HAVE you got Mr. Selwyn with you, Chips?" inquired the captain.

"Mr. Selwyn, sir? No, sir. Ain't seen him."

Uncle and niece looked at each other.

"Very queer," commented the captain. "Well, go on, Chips."

"Nothing to report, sir. Everything seems O. K. Ain't a soul aboard her, sir, nor any more bodies. No. 4 boat has been swung out on the davits and abandoned. Seems like they changed their minds."

"All right, Chips. Better get some food from the Chinaman."

"Can't make out what on earth can have happened to Selwyn," remarked the captain later as they waited. "He can't possibly have fallen overboard."

"Surely he could look after himself," suggested Vi.

"H'm. Awkward to explain if he doesn't turn up, dear."

Vi glanced at her uncle.

"Owner's son, eh? What does that matter now? This boat ought to put you beyond the favors of Selwyn & Company, oughtn't it, uncle?"

"Eh? What's that? Well, yes; I suppose so. Underwriters'll be thundering glad to see her again, I'll warrant. Yes, that's right, Vi; but still—I lost the *Hesperus*. Pity."

"But it was not your fault."

She glanced at her uncle.

"Good Heavens, uncle! I'm far more practical than you are! Don't worry about Selwyn. He'll turn up. That sort always does."

Although a gurgle was heard in the steering-gear pipe, fully two more hours passed before the one boiler raised sufficient power to move the propeller, which at last began with many grunts and sighs to revolve very slowly. When the *Monsoon* had got sufficient way upon her to answer the helm the captain put her on her course and gave Vi practical lessons in steering, which, as she had inferred, required very little natural intelligence—at any rate in comparatively calm weather.

After the usual little scrap between uncle and niece she had her way and he retired

to the adjacent chartroom to pretend to take a nap, on the understanding that Vi gave up the wheel at eight bells in the evening, leaving the Old Man to take the wheel during the night.

So it was that from midday to evening the *Monsoon* lumped and waddled along complainingly—every revolution seemed the last—making possibly five knots per hour with the wind on her quarter. Although Vi used the binoculars frequently never a sign of a ship, nor even the smoke of a steamer, stained the clear horizon.

Several times to Vi's annoyance Carnell, black with dust and sweat, ran up to the bridge "to get some air," he said; and once Chi Loo appeared bearing a cup of tea and without comment held out in the other yellow palm a small packet which caused Vi literally to yelp with delight.

"Oh, you darling!" she exclaimed, abandoning the wheel to tear open the cigarets. "Where on earth did you get 'em?"

"Plenty, plenty," asserted Chi Loo reassuringly and departed.

So it was that when the captain came on the bridge at what should have been eight bells in the afternoon he found his woman officer calmly breaking all the rules of any ship by smoking on duty.

"Nothing to report, uncle. Had a good sleep?"

"Yes; very good nap," replied the Old Man mendaciously. "But I'm very worried about Selwyn."

"Yes; seems very queer," Vi admitted, rather conscious of a sense of relief that he was not there to annoy her. "P'raps he's shut himself up in some cabin with the champagne. You know what he is."

"H'm. Don't think so."

The captain paced several times up and down the bridge and after examining the horizon came back to the wheel-house.

"Vi, are you sure that those people were poisoned or killed—that they did not die of some disease? Tropical, you know?"

"Oh!"

"Couldn't have been beriberi, could it? I know that the symptoms didn't tally, but—might be something else."

"I know very little about tropical medicine," admitted Vi, "but even if it were I can't see how they would all have been struck at exactly the same moment. And besides they must have shown some symptoms. Why, obviously, had they been sick they wouldn't have been about to eat a hearty breakfast, would they?"

"Hardly. But what was the object of the murderers? Lascars they must have been, but what did they get off with?"

"She wouldn't have been bringing bullion from the East, would she? Or perhaps it's something to do with some jewels that one, or some, of the passengers had? Might be something to do with some sacred jewel, Hindu or something, mightn't it? Such things have happened."

"H'm. In books, Vi. Never known such a romantic thing in my time."

"Oh, that doesn't prove anything, uncle," she said, and added politely, "except our want of imagination."

"Well, whatever it was," commented her uncle uneasily, "that doesn't explain what has become of Selwyn."

EVENING closed down swiftly in a glory of misty colors. Carnell insisted upon taking the wheel while uncle and niece dined. Afterward the captain, to please Vi, let her have the wheel until four bells, pretending to take another rest. When she retired to the chartroom, which was provided with a spare bunk, she found that the inimitable Chi Loo had provided a gorgeous silk dressing-gown which evidently he had found in one of the cabins.

"He's a perfect darling, that Chinaman!" murmured Vi; and then the recollection that the owner had passed out brought a momentary thrill, which was however as swiftly erased by experience. Yet as soon as she had placed the wrap around her shoulders the suggestion made by her uncle that the deaths possibly resulted from a tropical disease caused her hastily to throw it off.

"One never knows," she muttered. "Killing and death I can stand the thought of, but disease—ugh! Queer; disease always seems more terrible than just death."

She blew out the candle, which she was compelled to use—for naturally they could not spare any of the precious steam for the dynamo—and turned in. But the reaction from the excitement in the small boat and the tragedy on the steamer made her sleepless. She listened to the steady sigh of the breeze and the sea, which emphasized the unrhythmic thump and pause of the engines struggling gamely at each revolution;

listened also to the occasional mutter of the steam steering-gear above her, and she found leisure to remark the unreality of things. The days upon the *Hesperus*—monotonous days which she had resented because she had been persecuted by the missing Selwyn and the "sentimental" Carnell, as she had dubbed him—seemed to belong to another existence.

Then had come the loss of the *Hesperus*. The awful possibility of days in an open boat with little food and perhaps no water had completely obliterated the dislike for, and irritation caused by, Selwyn, even so much that she had not even resented the fact that he had held her while she slept.

Yet now, once comparative safety seemed assured, the old feelings of exasperation had revived; and toward Carnell also had returned the sense of embarrassment and resentment for spoiling the use, as it were, of her only possible companion.

After all, she mused, the chance of the accident seemed to carry with it a silver if not golden future for both her uncle, who certainly should be able to retire or purchase a shore job, and for Carnell to buy a command.

"Dear soul!" She pondered amusedly. "Perfectly sweet of him to give up drink for my sake! But why on earth must he make a nuisance of himself at the same time? In future," she decided, staring at the circle of misty stars through the open port, "I'll have to suppress that infernal maternal instinct—at all events with nice men. He is rather nice but— O-oh!"

Against her will a muffled scream was squeezed from her lips and her heart seemed to cease to beat as she stared in a paralyzed fashion at some mass which had blocked out the stars. The next instant Vi had gained some control over herherself, but as she leaped for the deck the thing disappeared.

"That fool Selwyn," she thought as she made for the door, "trying to be funny!"

But neither on the deck nor behind the chartroom was there any living creature. The shoulders of her uncle on the upper bridge were silhouetted round the corner of the wheel-house against the sky. For a moment she stopped to listen. Came only the heave and the thump of the sick engines and the sough of the wind and sea.

That she had seen something she was positive. She had not been asleep. Controlling the panic that arose within her, she searched swiftly and methodically all over the deck, even examining the fastening of the canvas cover on the one boat which remained on the bridge-deck. No sign of any movement or of any being could she discover. She mounted the bridge and asked her uncle whether he had seen anybody.

"Seen what? Where? Why, no. Did you mean Mr. Carnell?"

Vi related what she was positive she had seen.

"You must have dozed and been dreaming, dear," said he. "Or perhaps one of the men came up to shift a ventilator and looked in the chartroom, although I can't imagine what he— My God! What's that?"

Muffled yet distinct, floated a sound which surely developed into a voice singing, even the words of which were distinct:

"'. . . The winds and the waves of the turbulent se-ea!
Or demons or devils or whatever they be-e-e-!
They al-l shall sweetly obey my will! . . .
Peace, be still! Peace, be still!"

"It's—it's a Moody and Sankey hymn!" snickered Vi.

CHAPTER IX

"WHAT!" exclaimed the captain.

"Ssh!"

The voice rose, wailed, ceased abruptly as if stoppered, and shot up into a pronounced giggle.

"It must be Selwyn drunk!" exclaimed the captain. "But where on earth is he?"

He walked toward the rear of the bridge, toward the direction from which the voice had appeared to come, peered in the darkness and shouted:

"Selwyn! Hey, there! Mr. Selwyn! Is that you?"

But although he shouted several times no response of any kind was made.

"Queer," he muttered. "Take the wheel, Vi, and I'll go and look around."

"But, uncle," began Vi, "hadn't you better wait till daylight? That face—I——"

"What face, Vi?"

"The hairy face I saw at the port-hole."

"Nonsense, dear; you were dreaming; or mebbe it was this drunken fool. He'd have a few days' beard by now. I'll look around."

Vi obeyed and listened uneasily to the footsteps of her uncle walking slowly around the bridge. Twice she heard him call softly. Nothing save the lame thump of the engines and the sough of the wind and sea answered.

"Can't make it out, Vi," he commented on his return. "Haven't heard the voice again, have you?"

"Not a note. I suppose it must have been Mr. Selwyn. Anyway let us leave it till daylight, uncle."

"I suppose so. Can't spare any men to hunt a drunken fool anyway. Go and turn in again, dear."

"All right," answered Vi after a moment's hesitation. "Good night, uncle."

"Good night, dear."

She entered the chartroom again and, lighting the candle, peered around a little nervously. She did lie down and eventually fell asleep. Chi Loo awoke her with a cup of tea in his hand.

"Did you hear that voice last night?" she asked him.

Chi Loo stared bland interrogation.

"Well, did you hear anybody singing?"

"Sing? No hear um sing. Who make sing?"

"I don't know. I wish I did," returned Vi.

After a hurried sluice in the chartroom basin by way of toilet Vi mounted the bridge to relieve her uncle.

"No news, uncle?"

"None, dear. We must be well out of the ordinary lane by now. Anyway I'll take the sun at noon."

Save for the pageant of the dawn before the sun burned the colors out of the sky the sea was just the same foam-flecked mass as ever. Soon from beneath her she heard the steady snore of the captain, who was enjoying the first sleep he really had had since the *Hesperus* catastrophe. The monsoon weather is always warm and sticky. Standing watching the compass-needle and twiddling the little brass wheel becomes a monotonous job, particularly to those unused to the work. However, Vi—with the aid of the excellent cigarets bequeathed to her by the tragedy, which afforded her plenty to ponder upon—settled down to her watch with something of professional resignation. Just after Chi Loo, the ever thoughtful, had brought her some tea and biscuits a familiar voice startled her.

"Oh. You, Mr. Carnell! Why, you quite scared me. I am getting so used to being alone."

She looked at his unshaven face, still streaked with coal-grime, and smiled.

"Heavens," she added, "you didn't look into the chartroom port late last night, did you?"

"I look?" queried Carnell, staring at her. "Why, no. But why?"

As Vi related what had happened he gazed at her keenly.

"And uncle heard the voice singing too. It must have been Mr. Selwyn. Who else could it have been? The carpenter went over the ship, didn't he?"

"Yes, yes," replied Carnell reassuringly. "Probably Selwyn on a drunken spree and hiding himself somewhere—easy enough on a big ship such as she is."

"Perhaps; but the face?" she persisted. "It—it didn't look human. What are you looking at me like that for? D'you think I'm going crazy?"

"No, of course not," he answered gravely; "but I do think that you're run down and tired out. God knows you've had enough to kill any ordinary woman."

"Oh, Heavens, there's the woman again!" scoffed Vi. "Why on earth will you always persist in treating a woman as if she were Dresden china? Haven't you men learned anything at all in the past few years?"

"Yes, but still—I wish you'd let me take the wheel for a while and rest a bit, Miss Kelvett."

"Don't be absurd, I can do my part. You need a rest after stoking far more than I do. Here, have a cigaret and don't look so gloomy."

He lighted one and leaned against the adjacent rail staring out to sea.

"HOW much is this ship worth?" demanded Vi after a while.

"Worth?"

He turned with a startled air.

"Oh, I don't know. She must be about ten or twelve thousand ton. Somewhere around half a million pounds, I suppose."

"And the cargo more, I suppose."

"If it's general eastern I suppose so."

"Well, you get a salvage share with uncle, don't you?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, you'll be able to buy two or three commands if you want 'em, won't you?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so."

"Suppose so!" echoed Vi, twiddling the wheel. "Good Heavens, what's the matter with you? You look as if you had won a death sentence instead of a competence for life!"

He turned away moodily and stared out to sea again. Presently he added as if he were talking to the tumbling expanse before him——

"I suppose I ought not to grumble, but apparently when you get material desires you are bound to lose the other."

"Other? What other?"

Vi could have bitten her lip as he turned and gazed at her.

"Oh —— it, man," she exclaimed exasperatedly. "I'm not the only woman in the world!"

Without a word he turned and walked to the other end of the bridge and, leaning over the dodger, fell to gazing at the sea with his eyes averted.

"Oh, Heavens!" grumbled Vi to herself. "Why on earth are men so incorrigibly sentimental? I suppose the next thing is that awful Selwyn creature will turn up and begin to bore me again! . . . Well, it's about eleven-thirty, so I suppose I'd better call uncle if he wants to take the sun.

"Mr. Carnell!" she called. "Would you mind taking the wheel a moment while I call uncle? He wants to take the sun."

"Certainly, Miss Kelvett."

As he walked swiftly along the bridge he stopped abruptly.

"What's the matter?" Vi had begun when she realized that something unusual had happened.

The gentle sough of the wind and the swish of the sea seemed abnormally loud. Then she missed the limping thump of the engines.

With a smothered curse and an apology the sailor in the lovelorn second mate awoke. He sprang down the ladder and ran toward the engine-room, shouting to Vi, who, startled by the importance which he seemed to attribute to the stoppage of the engines, nearly deserted her post. The little speed the vessel had rapidly decreased with the result that she refused to answer to her helm and swerved off the course.

Seeing that it was useless to remain at wheel and wondering what had happened, Vi left the bridge. On reaching the deck she bethought herself that she might as well awaken her uncle as he had requested. Entering the chartroom, she went over to him where he lay stretched out on the locker-seat and shook him, saying——

"Nearly noon, uncle!"

As the captain appeared to be sleeping heavily she shook his shoulder the harder, repeating the summons. Still he did not stir.

"Uncle! Uncle! Wake up!" she cried, bending over him.

Then she grabbed him by the arm. His body rolled over, inert. For a second she stared at him bewilderedly. Then, noticing his eyes, she touched his face. Although not icy the flesh was cold.

"My God, I believe he's dead too!" she exclaimed; and, rapidly tearing open his light cotton shirt, she listened for the heart-beat which was not.

For a moment Vi stood back, feeling that shock which, no matter how used one had become to sudden death, never fails when the deceased is one of our own blood. As she stared at the dead face the expression and the position of the half-closed eyelids reminded her of the tragedy in the saloon, recalling too, despite the apparent inconsistence, the vision of the hairy face at the chart-house window. As, conscious of a pallid sensation about the cheeks, Vi turned to seek the second mate her foot crunched upon something upon the floor.

Mechanically she glanced down as she passed and noticed a broken egg-shell. Chi Loo must have brought eggs for his breakfast, she thought—yet somehow the sight stirred vague associations. But as she was wondering what significance they could have she heard the footsteps of Carnell returning.

"Oh, Mr. Carnell!" she exclaimed as soon as he appeared. "Uncle is dead!"

"Good God!"

He stopped abruptly and stared at her. She repeated the statement, adding:

"But I can't imagine what can have happened. He appeared rather tired but otherwise quite all right." She stared at the peculiar expression on the Second's face.

"Why, do you think it has anything to do with—with those others?"

"Yes—I mean—" he blinked and frowned as if trying to command his features—"Miss Kelvett, I'm afraid something serious is—er—happening."

"What d'you mean?"

"You remember that the engines stopped suddenly?"

"Why, yes, of course," said she with the air of one impatiently recalling an unimportant item.

"Well—you see I left the watch as usual, busy stoking, and found them—all dead."

"What!"

"Yes, dead. Lying about there with the shovels and rakes in their hands as if they'd all gone to sleep suddenly. Just the same as the people we found in the saloon."

Already made nervous by the double happening, Vi started at the swift patter of shoes on the companion stairs. A sharp cry was followed by the slap of feet on deck. They both turned in time to see Chi Loo dart out of the door, flit across the deck and up the bridge ladder.

"What on earth!" began Carnell.

"Look! The face in the port!" ejaculated Vi, arresting the Second by clutching his arm and pointing with the other.

From the companion door projected a long, hairy arm surmounted by the head of an ape, which, grimacing, vanished.

CHAPTER X

AS SOON as the ape had disappeared, Chi Loo descended apparently as calm as if nothing had ever occurred to ruffle his bland serenity.

"Chi Loo wolk; make tiffin," he explained. "Wild man catch um. No got nice knife; Chi Loo mus' go velly quick."

"But where did he come from?" demanded Vi, glancing at the companion door.

"No know. He come long. Chi Loo go catch um."

"But he'll tear Chi Loo to pieces, won't he?" queried Vi.

"Yes. Wait here, Chi Loo," commanded Carnell, "and I'll get a revolver. There's two in the chart-house."

The last words reminded Vi of her uncle.

"Oh, poor uncle!" she murmured. "But, Mr. Carnell, the orang-outan couldn't have killed him, could it? Nor the other people? I can't understand it. They strangle, don't they?"

"Yes, I think so. But we must find out. Will you go on the bridge and keep a lookout, Miss Kelvett? I'll rouse the crew for'a'd there and we'll hunt up this beast. Chi Loo, go along and call the men; savvee?"

"Me savvee," assented Chi Loo and departed.

For once Vi obeyed without question. The horizon was as deserted as usual. Automatically she lighted a cigaret and leaned over the rail, pondering on the death of her uncle—which was evidently caused by the same medium as those of the crew and passengers—and wondering what significance that ape could have.

An ape strangles or at any rate uses its terrible paws. The victims had died all together. Impossible, she decided, to connect the deeds with a brute.

Suddenly she recollected the bite on the arm of the little girl. That undoubtedly was done by the ape, but even then that offered no further solution of the mystery. Even supposing that the beast's teeth were poisonous—and she had never heard that they were—he could not have bitten them all simultaneously. Absurd. What, then?

And that voice singing hymns at night. That couldn't have been the ape. Had he, the singer, been Selwyn drunk? Had the orang-outan already killed him? It appeared ferocious; and any man unarmed would be like a doll in those great, hairy arms.

Some of her natural resistance seemed to have evaporated. She suddenly felt weak and helpless; unable to cope with something that appeared to be coiling around them; indeed, it seemed as if the ship were haunted.

"Rot!" she muttered at the thought.

There must be an explanation. But whatever that was that wouldn't be of much use if they were all going to be done to death.

She saw Chi Loo emerge from the forecastle followed by the five men who were left of the crew. The little sea-lawyer Gregory was at the head, arguing excitedly about something. The second mate, who was waiting on the break of the bridge, hailed them.

"'Ere, mister," demanded Gregory, "wot's this chink gassing about a bleedin' monkey?"

"Listen, men," said Carnell, "something serious has happened. There appears to be an orang-outan loose on board. From what Chi Loo says the beast appears to be dangerous. It's gone below and——"

"W'ere's the Old Man?" queried one man at the back.

"Now be quiet a moment and listen,"

continued Carnell. "You know the condition in which we found the remainder of the crew of this ship when we boarded her?"

"Wot's that gotter do wiv the monkey?"

"That's what I want to find out," acknowledged the Second. "But—Well, I'm sorry to tell you that the captain is dead——"

"Dead! Wot done 'im 'in? The monkey?"

"No. He died as the others did from some mysterious agency——"

"E're!" exclaimed Gregory as if suddenly aware of the fact. "Wot 'ave you stopped 'er for?"

"I'm coming to that. The engines stopped, and I went down to find the men lying about just like those people we found in the saloon."

"Wot! The bleedin' lot!" ejaculated several.

"Yes, unfortunately."

The men looked at each other.

"Oh, gor!" commented one.

"But, mister, wot's the monkey gotter do wiv it?"

"I don't know; we've got to find out. It's gone down below and we've got to hunt and find out——"

"Not me, guv'nor," said Gregory very decidedly.

"Nor me," said another.

"Let the blighter stay there."

"I've 'ad enough, I 'ave," asserted Gregory. "Same as them Lascars. No bloomin' wonder they quit! Wot d'you say, mates?"

CARNELL watched them as they began to discuss the situation. He had a revolver, but that would be no use in compelling them to search below.

"Look 'ere, mister," announced Gregory at length, "we've 'ad enough. We signed on the *'Esperus*. She's gawn, ain't she? Them others we found, and then the young feller, disappears; and now the Ol' Man's gawn and our mates as well. There somefing funny about this boat. 'Aunted I says. Don't mind 'Uns and fings. You kin get 'em; but this 'ere—bleedin' monkey an'——"

"But recollect, men," urged Carnell, "that the *Monsoon* is very valuable salvage and——"

"And ——!" said Gregory. "I'm on for the rhino, but not wiv bleedin' spooks an'—Oh, Gawd!"

The group of men, whose nerves were evidently already shaken, actually jumped as from behind the deck-house came the vague voice singing. But as Carnell rushed in the direction, revolver in hand, the voice ceased.

"It came from there beyond the fiddley," directed Vi from the top bridge.

Watched by the group of men and the placid Chi Loo, Carnell hunted around the deck but without finding ape or man.

"The voice came from that ventilator," he announced as he returned. "I'm going down to find out who is there. Who will volunteer?"

"Looking for a bleedin' monkey wot sings 'ymns! Oh, Lor', I'm off!" exclaimed one man solemnly and started for the fore main-deck.

Gregory and the others began to follow him.

"But, look here!" expostulated Carnell. "You're not going to leave the young lady?"

"She kin come wiv us, can't she?" demanded Gregory.

"I shall not leave the ship until Mr. Carnell thinks that we ought to," called Vi from the upper bridge. "He's in command now, recollect."

"—— 'e is!" protested Gregory. "Beggin' yer pardon, Miss. We ain't in 'is Majesty's service lookin' for' Uns, but just or'nary sailors on a tramp wot's gawn. W'en the *'Esperus* went so did our contract, missee. You arsk the Board o' Trade.

"We're going to git, salvage or no salvage, afore that there bleeding singing monkey does us in. You'd better come along."

In a group they moved away. Carnell called:

"Will you stop there, Miss Kelvett? I'm going down to find out what the trouble is. Then those fellows won't want to go."

"All right," assented Vi.

Followed by Chi Loo, Carnell hurried down the companionway. As she began to walk up and down the bridge Vi felt a sense of the uncanny—"funny," as the men had put it—produced by being up against something that reason could not grapple with. Of course a "singing monkey" was ridiculous; nor could it, she assured herself for the hundredth time, have anything to do with the wholesale slaughter. As a dismal foreboding that Carnell too would never appear alive gripped her, she knew that she was actually afraid.

The men came out of the forecastle carrying bundles of hastily gathered provisions and their wardrobes, which they had replenished on the *Monsoon*. As they passed over the lower bridge they called out urging her to join them. She did not deign to reply.

They made for the one boat left on the starboard side of the after end of the middle bridge and began to swing her out. Apparently there was some discussion about getting better provisions from the saloon, but nobody apparently was willing to descend to the proximity of the "singing monkey," as they termed the ape.

As she stood there, watching the black bows rising and falling almost imperceptibly against the expanse of sea gaily flecked in the bright sunlight, she grew very conscious of the body of her uncle in the chart-room below. A sense of awful desolation overcame her. She became the prey of a picture of herself alone in the great ship at the mercy of this orang-utan or whatever other horrors were beneath the deck that had been responsible for the death of the previous victims.

Hours it seemed, waiting on the bridge there, listening to the swish of the seas against the indifferent hull. She could hear the men abaft the engine-room skylight still wrangling about some matter.

"Fools!" muttered Vi angrily. "They don't know how to navigate, and they'll never be picked up!"

IN THE dismal statement Vi found pleasure which seemed to comfort her. If only a steamer would come along! She could not forget the body of her uncle in the chart-house. She lighted another cigaret to dispel the emotion. Perpetually she glanced anxiously at the companion doorway.

Then another thought disturbed her. Supposing the beastly ape came out and attacked her! She had no revolver nor a weapon of any kind.

Involuntarily her eyes sought the direction of the men loading the boat. Conviction began to grow that Carnell and Chi Loo had been killed too; that she would be left alone with this singing horror. There was another boat left, but she could not handle that single-handed.

Sense of time became distorted. At length in desperation she descended to the bridge-deck with an idea of seeking in the chart-house for another revolver, recollecting that Carnell had said that there were two.

As she approached the door she heard distinctly a step on the companion stairs. Certain that it was Carnell returning, she rushed to the door. She peered below, but she could not see any one.

"I'd better get that revolver," she thought, and turned toward the chart-house.

Simultaneously with the sound of scuffling feet a body struck her shoulders and arms wound about her. Convinced that the singing monkey had got her, she screamed. Then she heard a laugh and glimpsed a coat sleeve.

"Selwyn!" she gasped, and began to struggle furiously.

He laughed and, lifting her off her feet, bore her down the stairs, saying in her ear—

"I've got you now, you little devil!"

But the contact with something so tangible as Selwyn had instantly dispelled uncanny fear and allowed the return of reason. Vi lay still until he was half-way across the saloon and then made a convulsive wriggle. This enabled her to get out of his arms for a moment and to free her right hand, which she brought with all her force across his mouth.

He swore and grabbed her. They went down on the floor together. She fought as fiercely as a leopardess, trying to get a ju-jutsu hold. But he managed to evade her long enough to drag off the saloon tablecloth, which he succeeded in wrapping about her arms and mouth. At length, gasping with anger and exertion, he sat down on a chair and swore, telling her what he intended to do with her as he wiped sweat and blood from his face.

Suddenly he got up, entered the pantry and came back with a bottle of champagne, which he proceeded to drink. With his shirt in ribbons and the stubble of his face covered in streaks of blood, he looked an ugly object.

This man could not have been responsible for the first murders obviously. As Vi was thinking desperately how to circumvent him and wondering what had become of Carnell and Chi Loo a giggle sounded outside, and into the saloon pranced a creature in a shirt and a pair of dungaree pants. His straggly wisps of beard sprouted from a wizened face almost the color of mahogany

and his bald white cranium was decorated with tufts of gray hairs on each side.

As soon as he saw Vi lying prostrate on the floor he pointed and began to giggle afresh. Roughly Selwyn told him to "shut up," at which he subsided on the floor and began to sing softly, waving one ridiculous, skinny finger as if beating time. Selwyn looked at him, laughed and drank.

"This is Professor Lamberteau," said he, waving one hand between them. "Mad as a hatter, y' know, but quite a dear! Invented a nice little thing the Huns would have given millions for; but he's gone dotty; which is a pity, what? Pity too he ain't a parson; then he might marry us; eh, darling?"

He leered at her and bending deliberately kissed her on the cheek above the gag.

"Sorry I had to gag you, ol' thing," he continued mockingly, "but I haven't disposed of your amiable lover yet. I've got a revolver now, pettest. As soon as the men have gone—what's left of 'em after Professor Nutty has finished with them—and I've finished this thirst you've given me I'll go and fix him, you bleeding little wildcat."

Vi's heart gave a thump of relief at the news that Carnell was still alive.

"Oh, shut up, you old fool!" added Selwyn sharply to the singing idiot.

"You'll bring him down here——"

"Then we'll have a nice little honeymoon; eh, sweetheart? We're sure to be picked up sooner or later. There's enough food for three months anyway although I doubt whether the booze will last me that long. Then salvage will recompense me for all the little inconveniences and the *Hesperus* your fool of an uncle lost."

As he stopped to take another drink Vi saw around the corner of the open saloon door the hairy face of the monkey peering.

"As for you," continued Selwyn, "well, darling dearest, if you consent to behave yourself we'll go halves with the loot, eh? If not——"

At that moment Vi saw a white object leave the hand of the ape. As it smashed in front of her, Selwyn literally screamed and the mad professor squawked.

Both sprang for the door and banged it behind them. As she listened to their footsteps racing up the companion stairs she stared perplexedly at the smashed egg in front of her, the yolk of which had sprayed over her dress.

CHAPTER XI

HELPLESS and dumb, Vi lay where she had been placed on the floor, staring bewilderedly at the scattered yolk mess, wondering what could possibly have caused the evdient terror in both Selwyn and the lunatic at the sight of a falling egg. For several moments more she lay. However, that was no time or place to solve such problems. Vi began to wriggle to get loose. The table-cloth, bound hastily around her arms and mouth, was not very securely fastened, and with a little ingenuity she succeeded in freeing herself. Just as she reached the companion steps she heard a pistol-shot followed by an oath in Selwyn's voice.

Rushing on to the deck, she saw him lying prone with a revolver in one hand peeping round the painted canvas of the rail on the break of the bridge. For a second she paused, wondering what purpose he could have and from whom he was hiding. Then, divining that his opponent must be either Chi Loo or Carnell, she ran on tiptoe across the deck and sprang upon his back, seeking to hold his shoulders down as she screamed:

"I've got him! Quick! Mr. Carnell!"

The suddenness of the attack succeeded insofar as it caused Selwyn to release the revolver. Then with a muffled curse he raised his haunches, half-unseating her, and wriggled round on to his side. Although she was an athletic girl yet he was by no means soft in spite of his drinking.

But just as he managed to grapple with her she succeeded in getting an arm lock. His next effort brought an oath of pain and he subsided quickly. As she caught sight of the mad professor with the wispy beard, and of two of the deserting crew running back across the deck he cried out:

"All right! All right! I'll give in!"

As she let him get up she had just time to notice that the pale eyes of the professor person had lost the idiotic expression they had when she saw Carnell leap up the ladder from the main-deck with a revolver in his hand. Then, before either she or any of the three men had time to grab him, Selwyn, crying some inarticulate words, rushed at Carnell as he came across the deck.

Seeing that Selwyn was unarmed, Carnell

stood back as if expecting his revolver to arrest the other but, apparently oblivious of Carnell's weapon, in his rage, Selwyn ran straight upon the Second and landed a glancing punch on the other's jaw. Carnell pitched the revolver behind him and parried a rain of blows. As the two sailors and the professor ran forward with the obvious intention of holding Selwyn off, Carnell, whose eyes were quivering with anger, sidestepped and shouted to them to stand back.

Selwyn made a swift rush, feinted and, missing an attempt at a kidney punch, received a half-hook which brought a grunt in acknowledgment. This was followed by a straight right which sent him reeling across the deck.

Carnell held his ground as if he would not deign to follow up the advantage. But whatever else Selwyn was, he was game. He recovered and came back for more, but warily.

For a few moments the two did little more than footwork, Selwyn keeping off and evidently playing for time. As they fought Vi suddenly realized that, unconsciously at first but consciously now, they had challenged each other to a fight for her.

"Mr. Carnell!" she cried out and, turning to the men, exclaimed—

"Seize Mr. Selwyn and make them stop it!"

"Leave him alone!" shouted Carnell angrily, revealing how much his mind was upon Vi, and paid the penalty of the moment's inattention when Selwyn landed a smashing punch on his mouth. However, the men, who had been joined by two of their mates, had made no move to interfere at Vi's request, having, like all their breed, the innate respect for a fair fight, and neither they nor Carnell had knowledge of Selwyn's behavior toward Vi.

The professor, who was standing beside Vi, asked in a curiously querulous voice where these people had come from. But Vi was naturally too much occupied to answer such idiotic questions.

At that moment Carnell, as if satisfied that he had got his adversary's measure and now desired to finish the fight, rushed and got home three severe punches on the heart, ribs and jaw, the last just failing to put Selwyn out. The latter promptly smothered and tried to grapple. He was sufficienty skilful to hold a clinch for a few seconds; then breaking, he let loose a nasty upper-cut, severely jolting Carnell on the jaw. The Second answered with a left swing and a right punch, both of which Selwyn was agile enough to avoid.

AGAIN came a pause as Selwyn backed around, revealing the inroads of overindulgence in the painful gasps of his lungs. His face was blooded and one eye swollen. Carnell also was bleeding from the smash on the mouth. Although Vi cried out again in protest she was dimly conscious of a strange emotion which seemed to keep her limbs glued to the deck; an emotion which throbbed intoxicatingly at each successful blow from either man.

Then quite suddenly Carnell appeared to falter, hesitated and gave ground slightly. Selwyn, fogged somewhat, fell to the ruse and rushed. A swift sidestep and a neatly timed swing sent him to the deck.

By chance apparently, he fell almost on top of the discarded revolver. As his adversary paused Selwyn stirred, rose half to his knees and appeared to roll over.

"All right," he moaned. "I'm done."

But as Carnell walked over to assist him Selwyn suddenly pointed the revolver and fired pointblank at Carnell. The men exclaimed. Vi cried out and rushed to Carnell, who had reeled to one side.

But as she reached him one man yelled "The swine!" and, turning, she saw Selwyn disappearing down the companion steps. But at the moment Vi was not concerned with him.

"Aren't you hurt?"

"He got my shoulder. I think that's all," returned Carnell quietly. "Let me sit down for a moment. Never mind, men," he called to two of the sailors who were disputing about the singing monkey at the companion hatch.

"We'll get him later, he can't get away. Who's this man here?" he added, indicating the professor, who was staring at everybody in a bewildered way.

"Oh, I don't know who anybody is," exclaimed Vi. "I mean we're all mixed up. Cut away your coat. And I want some hot water. Where's Chi Loo?"

"Here, missee," Chi Loo answered, placidly stepping from the chartroom. "I watch Mistle Sellyn cussee too muchee. I get hot water."

"Don't bother now, Miss Kelvett," began Carnell.

"Don't be idiotic!" admonished Vi. "Give me a knife, somebody."

As she cut the threads of the coat around the injured shoulder Chi Loo suddenly appeared.

"Mistle Sellyn," he announced blandly, "he go dead."

"Oh, gor, it's the bleeding singing monkey!" exclaimed one of the men.

"Never mind if he's dead or not," snapped Vi. "Get that hot water—and lint from the medicine-chest. Savvee lint?"

"I savvee lint," agreed Chi Loo, and disappeared.

"Here you," commanded Carnell to two of the men. "Go and get that revolver that fellow stole and shoot that bleeding monkey."

He added, looking over Vi's shoulder at the wispy bearded stranger—

"Where the —— have you come from?"

"But," said the stranger with an anxiously bewildered air, "where have you come from?"

CHAPTER XII

VI GLANCED up from cutting the sleeve of Carnell's coat.

"But didn't Mr. Selwyn tell you?" she queried.

"Mr. Selwyn?" repeated the stranger. "Who's Mr. Selwyn?"

"Why," exclaimed Vi, "that young man with whom you— Oh!"

She paused, knife in the air, aware of the difference between the man before her and the giggling, singing idiot in the saloon.

"You don't remember that young man who was fighting with Mr. Carnell here?"

"Never saw the man in my life!"

The stranger passed his hand over his bald head perplexedly.

"I can't make out what has happened since—since——"

"Since what?" demanded Vi.

The old man gave signs of intense agitation, plucking at his wispy beard and stuttering.

"I c-can't make out who—who you are," he said at length querulously. "I— Where did you c-come from? Where are the others—and what has become of them?"

"Who?"

"Them?"

He glanced around nervously and added—

"Are they really dead—or did I imagine it?"

"Listen," said Carnell, quietly gathering something of the truth. "We belonged to the *Hesperus* of Cardiff, which struck a derelict and went down in five minutes. We took to the boats and came across the *Monsoon* the next day.

"She appeared to be abandoned. But we found on board passengers and all officers except the Second, dead. The rest of the crew had taken to the boats—bolted. Since then we've lost the captain and half of our men in the same way. Who are you and what does it all mean?"

The quiet tones seemed to reassure the man, who was obviously suffering from some extreme nervous shock. He blinked and snuffled absurdly like a child and then fell to staring absently at the flecked sea. Chi Loo appeared with hot water and lint.

"Oh, my God!" remarked the man solemnly and, turning his head, gravely watched Vi washing the wounds.

"You know something went wrong here. I'll tell you. I joined the *Monsoon* at Singapore. This is the *Monsoon*, isn't it?" he added anxiously.

"Yes, yes," assented Vi.

"Yes," he said. "I recollect that distinctly. We left Calcutta and reached Colombo all right. Oh, yes. Then I took to letting Datto loose."

"Datto? Who's Datto?" queried the second.

"Why, don't you know Datto Tuan?" demanded the man surprizedly.

"He means the ape—orang-outan—don't you?" suggested Vi.

"Why, yes!" The man nodded gratefully.

"You see," he added gravely, "he's a great friend of mine. We've been together now for years and——"

"What are you by profession?" interposed Carnell.

"I? Naturalist. Why, I've spent fifteen years in Borneo and the Archipelago. My name's Lamberteau, George Lamberteau."

Carnell, forgetting the ache of his wound, stared at him. Then, feeling that he was addressing a child, he said indulgently:

"I see. Well, go on, Mr. Lamberteau."

Suddenly Mr. Lamberteau threw out his hands in excitement.

"Then I saw him throwing it and found myself running up the companion stairs and——"

"One moment, Mr. Lamberteau," interrupted Vi. "What happened before that?"

"Eh?" bewilderedly.

"You said you left Colombo and let loose the—Datto Tuan, and then?"

George Lamberteau placed his hands to his head again.

"You know I'm not right yet," he remarked at large. "Something—" he waved one hand in a circle—"something goes round. Those people— Oh, my God!"

"You let loose Datto Tuan after you left Colombo," repeated Vi remorselessly. "And then?"

He gazed at her like a schoolboy confronted by the head, to whom he is forced to confess a peccadillo.

"I couldn't help it," he said. "I couldn't. I never thought for a moment that he could know where they were. . . . You see, we were all at breakfast, and then Datto rushed in and threw one and I leaped. I remember holding my nose and rushing across the table and—and——"

He paused, staring at them as if asking for asistance.

"The footprint on the table-cloth," commented Vi to Carnell, "and the overset egg. Well, and what then, Mr. Lamberteau?"

"Then he threw it again and—and I ran up the stairs, and——"

"Found us here; is that it?"

"Why, yes! But where do you come—Oh, I remember you told me, didn't you? Or did I dream it?"

"What is he talking about?" queried Carnell.

"I've got an idea," replied Vi, stripping lint. "Tell me if I hurt too much. Let me talk to him. Mr. Lamberteau, don't you recollect meeting that young man down below?"

"What young man?"

"The man who shot Mr. Carnell?"

"Why, no! He's with you, isn't he?"

"Yes, yes," assured Vi, and whispered to Carnell:

"He's had a sort of shell-shock, you know; I've seen 'em. Now he's getting his memory. Wait. Mr. Lamberteau," she began again, "what was the thing that Datto threw?"

"I couldn't help it!" wailed the man excitedly. "I couldn't! It wasn't my fault! I didn't know that he knew where they were! I——"

"Of course you're not to blame, Mr. Lamberteau," said Vi reassuringly. "That's all right; we know that. But tell me now what was it that Datto threw?"

"Why, the ether bombs."

"The what!" exclaimed Carnell.

"Bombs! Lumme!" ejaculated the men.

"Be quiet!" commanded Vi. "Mr. Lamberteau, what were the bombs for?"

Again his hands flew out protestingly.

"I couldn't help it! I didn't know he could know where they were. Oh, God, why didn't I destroy them! Oh, my God, my God!"

"That's all right, Mr. Lamberteau. We know it wasn't your fault."

"You do know that? You do?" he demanded anxiously. "You'll swear to that?"

"Yes, yes. But you must tell us what they were for."

"Why, certainly."

There was a note of relief in his voice.

"You see, always in getting specimens the bones or at least the hide is destroyed or damaged in shooting them and if you poison them you never know where you can find them again. I got an idea when they began using bombs at the beginning of the war and I experimented.

"You see," he added with an incongruous touch of pride, "I'm a professor of physics too; and I perfected this bomb—compound of ether and cyanogen, you know. Well, at first it didn't work. Often they would not explode.

"They had to be a contact bomb because the ground is so soft—it's swampy where the orang-outan lives—and then I hit on the idea of blowing an egg and inserting the compound."

"But what about Datto?"

"Oh, I took Datto as a baby and trained him with ordinary eggs. I used to punish him if he broke one. He could stalk right up to the apes and then throw the egg. They were instantly asphyxiated.

"On board he stole eggs from the steward and bombarded the passengers, who thought he was a great joke. Then one day when I had been examining the few egg-bombs I had I was called away and carelessly left them on the cabin-seat and Datto stole them. I could not find them nor make him give them up. Oh, God!"

Yet his eyes opened wide as he began to forget the tragedy in the excitement of the successful chemist.

"I've got the finest specimens ever secured—not a muscle bruised or a hair disarranged!"

CHAPTER XIII

"BUT what do you think Selwyn was doing all that time?" queried Vi as she leaned on the rail smoking a cigaret.

"I suppose we'll never know exactly," replied Carnell, twiddling the brass wheel a few inches. "Probably the naturalist man Lamberteau came into the pantry when he was drinking there and Selwyn learned enough from him to see a chance either to get rid of us by scaring us off the ship, or perhaps, which is more likely, to kill most of us off and get both you and the ship.

"That he had found the egg-bombs or got them from the monkey somehow is proved. He must have been mad with rage and bolted down below after trying to shoot me, with the intention of returning with the egg-bombs and wiping out everybody. Possibly he was a bit groggy from the fight and slipped."

"Or perhaps the ape tried to get them from him and between them they dropped the bombs which killed both of them?"

"Maybe. Anyway it doesn't matter; they're both dead."

Vi stared speculatively at the mass of the funnel swaying slightly against the misty stars. Above the gentle swish and sough of the monsoon and sea came the limping groan of the engines.

"Poor uncle!" murmured Vi. "No wonder that poor little man went crazy after the monkey wiped out the whole cabinful. He was absolutely insane when I first saw him in the saloon there. Then the monkey throwing that egg—a real one, fortunately for me!—gave him another shock which brought back his memory more or less. I've seen shell-shock cases react exactly the same way.

"But imagine afterward—that beast must have gone about like a naughty child throwing eggs or bombs at everybody he saw. And of course they would probably have laughed when they saw the beast with an egg in its hand. You remember Mr. Lamberteau said that they had thought it a —— of a joke. Ghastly! I wonder whether the wretched ape killed uncle?"

"No, I don't think so," responded Carnell. "I think Selwyn did that. He hated your uncle because—well— And I think he had got hold of the bombs and dropped one in the stoke-hole."

"But what could he have done if he had been alone on the boat? I mean the salvage?"

"Oh he wouldn't have been alone."

"Don't, please!"

"And if he had met a steamer he could probably have driven a bargain for sufficient men to work the engines. Quite probably. Just as we could now if one would only turn up. However, it doesn't matter much. We can waddle along like this as far as the coast-line."

"When d'you think we ought to get there?"

"Oh, about four days, I reckon, if this monsoon holds; and I don't think it's due yet to change to the other direction. By ——, those fellows will deserve all they will get. Three men to a watch to keep even one boiler going is heavy work."

"I suppose it is," assented Vi. "What happens when we get into port?"

"Oh, I shall report to the nearest agents and they will cable the owners, who will swear and report to the underwriters, who will also swear—but with joy though!"

"Then you'll go home by mail?"

"Me? Oh, I don't know. They might give me the job of bringing her home."

"Oh." Vi was silent for a moment. "Perhaps," she said in a quiet voice, "I might come home—on the *Monsoon*."

"I hope you won't," he answered quickly in a low voice.

"What!" she exclaimed, pretending surprize. "Why not?"

"I— Oh, I'd rather not. You know why."

"I don't." Vi brushed back her hair as if trying to see better in the gloom.

"Of course, if you don't want me to I won't. Now it's my trick at the wheel."

She moved alongside him. As she sought to take the brass rim of the wheel her fingers encountered his hand.

"Come along!" she snapped impatiently, and looked up at him.

Then the two heads melted into one form silhouetted against the misty stars.

The Man-Maker

by

Edgar Young

Author of "Converging Trails," "The No-Good Guy," etc.

LEAVING Rio de Janeiro on foot for São Paulo, we passed a dark-skinned man with an overalls pack on his back. He gave us a sidewise glance and bowed his head without speaking. We were dressed in the latest Ouvidor styles, but not one milrei did we have in pocket. We had no outfit, nothing but the clothes we wore on our backs.

Our stay in Rio had cost us at the rate of a thousand dollars a month; and cheap at the price, for Rio is a city of enchantment. To a casual observer Eugene Rodin and I would have appeared as two gentlemen out for a stroll instead of being vagabonds en route to a city four hundred and eighty miles away.

That night we slept in a fence-corner somewhere between Rio and Belem; and, walking down the track the next morning, we found five wood-choppers eating a breakfast of black beans and *farinha* meal a short distance from where we had slept. They stared at our high silk hats and clothing when we begged them for something to eat, but they dished out a supply of food and gave us each a cup of black coffee.

As we ate, the man with the pack passed us. He looked surprized when he recognized us as the men who had passed him on the road the previous afternoon, but he went on by without stopping.

We had time to note that he wore a pair of blue overall trousers, a heavy woolen shirt and a strong pair of shoes with thick soles. The ropes on his pack were tied and knotted snugly and the pack set correctly on his shoulders, showing him to be a man of both neatness and experience. This we knew by having hit trail with men who judge another by such items as this.

Leaving Barra do Pirahi a couple of days later, we saw him ahead and, hastening rapidly, we soon passed him and left him behind. We thought little of him until he got by us when we climbed over the top of the Tunnel Grande. The tunnel is something over a mile long and the clearance very close if a train passes. When we had again gained the railroad track he was out of sight ahead of us.

Late that afternoon we came upon a Swedish section foreman, a man who had deserted a ship in Rio twenty years before, sitting in front of his house, which faced the track, entertaining several of the prominent citizens of the small village with sandwiches of Minas cheese and fiery *cachasa*. Hearing us speaking English, he called to us to come back and join them and, taking us aside, asked us if we cared to sell our clothes.

Strictly speaking, he cheated us fearfully, for our suits had cost eighty dollars each, to say nothing of twelve-dollar shirts, fourteen-dollar shoes, and twenty-dollar hats; but we were glad to trade for khaki trousers, jumper, heavy brogans, butternut hat and a light blanket.

The bargain also included a frying-pan, two cakes of Minas cheese, a bag of *farinha*, three liters of black beans and a couple of kilograms of ground coffee. We held out our collar-buttons, cuff-links and pocket-knives for future trading.

Being in an outfit that provided some comfort for hiking, we bent our necks and walked early and late. The railroad follows the Parahyba River for a great part of the distance, but going in the direction we were there was no chance of floating down it for we were going up-stream.

The country grew wild as Siberia. We came to a mountain and could see the track winding back and forth above us. A section-gang, working the track with huge garden-hoes, pointed out a path which cut straight across, and we labored up this and down on the other side. It was just getting dusk, and we camped a few paces from the track by the side of a cool mountain-stream.

Hearing some one walking on the railroad, we looked and saw the man with the blanket-roll we had seen on the outskirts of Rio. We had gained on him by crossing the mountain. Few people walk from Rio to São Paulo. We had met no one tramping in the opposite direction, and this was the only hobo we had encountered.

He came over to our fire and laughed heartily as he saw the change we had made in raiment. He squatted by our fire and began preparing his supper, chatting the while in perfect English with scarcely a trace of accent. His frying-pan was equipped with a "reflector" to bake his cake of bread, and his manner of cooking was that of an American prospector.

When he had finished eating and had washed his frying-pan and tin plate we fell to talking. We recounted our adventures since leaving Panama and back beyond in Central America and Mexico. His eyes glistened when we spoke of small towns on the west coast of Mexico in the vicinity of Escuinapa, and he grew silent and listened intently to each word.

High overhead the stars gleamed coldly. To the south blazed the Southern Cross. Polaris was down beneath the horizon. Our little camp-fire stabbed at the darkness, which surrounded us like a curtain. Our faces glowed like dull, burnished copper.

Down below, the brook gurgled and murmured among the stones. From mountain and plain now and again came the night-call of some bird or animal. Queen Mab, the fairy, came in her car made of a single pearl and wrapped us around with her shimmering veil, and our gaunt, hollow eyes glimpsed life with a rosy tint, as those of the four lean, unshaven men in the garret had done when she came to them.

Our companion finished his cigaret and tossed the stump among the coals as we ceased speaking.

"Brothers," he began, "I am a Mexican born, from the *pueblocito* of Santa Ysabel, on the coach-road from Mazatlan to Tepic; but I have been on big trails with big men and I have seen things and have seen life with my own eyes. So that you may understand, it is well that I begin at the beginning; and if I should speak amiss of your people it is not that I have prejudice in my heart, for I have traveled through your States and I know that men are not to be loose-herded there any more than they are in other countries."

We nodded for him to proceed.

"FROM a small child I had heard of the dreadful gringos, men without fear and without honor, blond, conquering brutes; for it was thus that the mothers scared their children when they were stubborn. *'Ya vienen los gringos!'* was shouted many times a day, and men and women repeated little doggerel verses that had to do with the fierce men of the north who stole land, carried away women and who ate up children at one quick gulp. It is not to be wondered at that in our hearts grew up a hatred and a fear of your race.

"Nor is it to be wondered at that a great fear prevailed among grown men and women when finally the gringos came—big, rough-looking men surveying out the line of the railroad from Mazatlan to Guadalajara. On their heels came others by twos, and threes and by dozens and hundreds bringing mules and scrapers and tents and construction-material. The heavens shook with the rumble of the explosions as they tore a way through the cliffs for the grade

and as they shouted and lashed the mules over the dumps with heavy shot-whips which flayed the hair from the poor beasts' backs.

"Americans worked as mule-gaffers, as foremen, as laborers, and among them were some forty Yaqui Indians from far up in the State of Sonora—big men who could stand the hard tasks put upon them by the gringo foremen; but no Mexican *peon* could stand such tasks.

"Further, these Americans kept no holiday of the Church, of which there are over two hundred in the year—not even Sunday; nor the national holidays of the country—not even the day of the *Grito de la Independencia* when all men and women in Mexico are allowed to do as they please. Day and night they worked on the grade and the track, laying five kilometers of steel each day. And our people, going among them fearfully at first, were treated roughly but were paid huge sums of money for the corn and provisions they carried for sale.

"Some of the gringos who spoke a little of our language gave out the report that they wished to buy girls from us to work for them and be their slaves, and some of the poorest families carried their girls to them, selling them like dogs to the Americans for as much as fifty Mexican dollars. Soon there were many of our girls living in the camps as wives of the Americans, contrary to the law of the land and of the Church. And they were dressed up in fine clothes and shoes and were brazen and boastful when they came amongst us for a visit.

"My mother had scarcely enough *tortillas* to feed us. My father had been stabbed to death years before in a drunken row on Holy Saturday following Good Friday and she eked out a living by doing odd work in the poor village. So she made ready my four sisters, Juana, Julia, Maria and Conchita; fourteen, thirteen, eleven and eight years of age.

"I was the oldest, just fifteen; and the five of us cried and rolled together upon the dirt floor with Salvador, the pet goat, and Mochito, the short-tailed pig. My mother threw her apron over her head and wept with us, but her heart was unmoved. She was my mother, poor, ignorant, and perhaps she thought it was for the best. *Quien sabe?* It is not for me to judge her harshly.

"We came into their camp during the noon hour and a crowd of them gathered around us, bidding for the girls in broken Spanish and by holding up the outstretched fingers of their hands. *'Quenti valt la muchacha?' 'Quando quiere por eja?' 'Me wantee esta,'* and similar phrases.

"And my four sisters were sold by my mother for two hundred Mexican dollars paid into her hands by four huge, red-faced men dressed in brown overalls. They were led away crying.

"My mother did not cry. She dropped on her knees and began wrapping the money into her apron, for she had never seen so much wealth at one time before. I was a big, soft, peon boy, and I stood bawling at the injustice of things that should make my mother sell my sisters into the hands of these rough men.

"A tall, silent gringo who had stood apart approached as my mother stood up and prepared to go. He motioned to me and made signs that he wished to buy me.

"My mother looked long at me and at the man and at last shook her head. The man counted out twenty-five Mexican dollars; and, although my mother's eyes glowed when she saw the money, she refused.

"The man added more until he held fifty dollars in his hand in bills and silver. She refused again and, clutching me by the shoulder, started to leave.

"The American stopped her with a short command. He drew forth a roll of money from his hip pocket and extended a bill of one hundred dollars.

"My mother trembled as she took the money. Clutching me in her skinny arms, she kissed me on the forehead and gave me over to the gringo. Then she ran away. I heard her sobbing as she ran and watched her until she was out of sight. I never saw either her or my sisters again.

"THIS man who had bought me as a man buys a sheep or a dog stood looking me over for a few moments and then motioned for me to come with him. We went to the commissary and he bought quite a quantity of provisions and camp-utensils, paying for them with *bilumbiques* or script money that the company issued to its employees. He also bought a suit of brown overalls for me, a hat, underwear and a pair of shoes.

"Up to twelve years of age I had never worn so much as a stitch of clothing, and since that time had worn only a ragged pair of white trousers patched together by my mother from clothing she had begged from others. I had never had a hat or underwear; as for shoes, none but the officers in the army wore them in our district. This is not to be wondered at when you consider that the wage of a strong peon was only nine Mexican centavos per day, worth four and a half cents in American gold.

"But I thought nothing of these clothes he was buying for me. I blubbered as I thought of Salvador, the pet goat, and grunting Mochito, the short-tailed pig, comrade of many a play on the dirt floor.

"I thought of my mother broiling *frijoles* over the coals and setting the round *tortillas* on edge back of the fire as she browned more of them. Many times I had seen her weep from the smoke of the wood, for the hut had no chimney; but I knew this night she would weep real tears, as she had the night my father was brought home in a blanket. Blood is thick, even the blood of the poor, and I myself had heard women wailing the loss of their children in the *pueblocito* when they had sold them to the gringos.

"Perhaps in their dumb way they thought to sacrifice themselves to better their children's lot. Knowing them as I do, I can not find it in my heart to blame them. They were animals and looked upon and saw life after the fashion of animals.

"As I thought of home my heart grew heavy and my head swam with homesickness. I started to run out of the door, but the big gringo man grabbed me by the hair of the head and gave me a slap with his open hand that made my ears ring.

"He bade me to take up the boxes of supplies he had bought, and when I had done so he followed across the track to a row of tents. Here we entered a tent which was boxed up half-way with boards and floored.

"On the floor lay a blanket-roll. The cot had been stripped bare. I knew then that this man was preparing for a journey.

"I broke from the door and started to run away again. He overhauled me in a few quick strides, and this time he did not slap me. He held me off at arm's length and kicked me viciously. When he released me I fell to the ground and lay there, for my spine was half-paralyzed from the blows of his heavy shoes.

"He went in to the tent and brought out the clothing he had bought for me. He stood watching until I rose to my feet, then took me to a row of bath-houses behind the tents and bade me enter. He gave me a cake of soap and a rough brush and made signs for me to strip off my single garment and wash.

"He turned the water on and it began to pour from a shower over my head. Each time I started to move out from under the shower he shoved me back and made signs for me to rub myself. I feared his wrath and rubbed until my skin was sore from head to foot. Never before had I taken a bath, except to wash the dust from my face and hands with a few dabs of water without soap.

"I was shivering from the water, which was not cold, and it seemed an hour before I had satisfied my tormentor that I had finished the job. He turned off the water and gave me a towel. When I was dry he made me put on the suit.

"The cloth was stiff and unwieldy. When I put on the shoes it seemed as if I were thrusting my feet into solid boxes of wood. I put the hat on and followed the gringo clumsily, walking like a very old man, what with the pinch of the shoes and the stiffness in my back from his heavy kicks.

"I think it was when I turned and saw him laughing at me that I first began to hate him. Up to now I had taken things as a matter of course, as Mochito would have done had I thrown him on his back and rubbed his nose in the dust, or as Salvador would have done had I twined my hands in his long hair and dragged him across the floor.

"But now an unreasoning rage took possession of me. I hated this gringo man, of those white men who worked like demons and who bought girls and boys from their parents.

"Raising my two fists, I turned and dashed upon him. I did not touch him. With a short jab his fist struck my chin and I went down to the ground.

"When I came to myself he was sitting on the step of the tent watching me. As I crawled to my feet he entered the tent and began arranging the blanket-rolls for us to pack.

"I followed and stood above him as he kneeled, rolling the packs and knotting the ropes with his large, muscular hands. Had I had a knife I surely would have plunged it into his back, for my heart was boiling with sullen anger and red spots floated before my eyes.

"He finished rolling and roping the packs to his liking and then motioned for me to turn and have one of them put upon my back. When it sat upon my shoulders he took up the other and slipped his huge arms through the ropes. Walking ahead, he motioned for me to follow him.

"We passed down the street between the tents. My master stopped and chatted with a few of the other gringos he met as we passed out of the town. The shoes were crushing my toes, the ropes of the pack bit into my shoulders, my jaws were swollen from the blow he had give me on the chin, a dull ache was in my back and my heart was broken with homesickness.

"Thus I left the home of my birth, the slave of a man with whom I could not speak. Was there wonder that I hated him? I vowed and swore by the saints as I had heard grown men do in Santa Ysabel that I would kill this man the first time I had the chance.

"IT WAS late in the afternoon when we set out, heading down the newly-laid track in the direction of Tepic and Guadalajara. After following this for a few miles the gringo searched the sierras off to the east with a careful eye and we left the track and headed across the plain in the direction of the mountains, passing a few miles south of Escuinapa, which in turn lay a few miles south of my home village. Sensing that I might try to slip away, the gringo made me go ahead of him and, bowing under the packs, we soon left my home far behind.

"I had ceased to blubber. Homesickness had left me. My heart knew only anger and a desire to kill this man burned within me. Perhaps it was because I was a pure-blooded Indian, although a Mexican, that this was so.

"The pain had given me fortitude. Also it had given me patience. I would wait my chance and strike quick and sure.

"That night we camped in the bottom of a deep *barranca* at the edge of the sierras. The gringo showed me how to build the fire and made me watch him cook the food for both of us. When he put my portion on my tin plate I grabbed for it to take it in my hands and wolf it as we were used to do at home, where a *tortilla* served for knife, fork, spoon, and bread—a sort of implement that grew smaller with each bite, for when a scoopful of beans went into the mouth that much of the *tortilla* was also bitten away.

"He grabbed my wrists and forced a knife and fork into my hands. Although I watched him carefully I was scarcely able to eat fast enough to appease my hunger. I took this as another kind of torture he was making me endure.

"When we had finished he motioned for me to take up the dishes and pans that had been used and carry them to the creek. Here he taught me how to scour with soap and sand until everything was bright and clean.

"When we had lain down to sleep I resolved to stay awake and kill him by striking him over the head with a large stone that lay near. Several times I opened my eyes and saw him staring across the fire at me quietly. Then I went to sleep and did not awake until it was broad daylight and he was prodding me to wakefulness with his toe.

"We had breakfast, climbed the mountain until noon, ate dinner, walked until dusk, ate supper, slept and began the march the following day. For eighteen days we traveled thus into the wildest part of Old Mexico. The mountains grew higher on all sides; the air was so cold that I shivered from morning until night.

"The gringo seemed to be searching for something among the mountains. He would stop and look up valleys and peer into the sands of the clear streams and pick up bits of stone and stare at them. I had learned a few words of his language and I was learning something of his ways.

"He had struck me many times for breaking certain rules that he observed in eating, bathing and keeping the camp clean. I soon came to see that he had struck me, not because he wanted to force his manner upon me, but because my filthiness disgusted him and interfered with his own enjoyment. This caused me to watch him closely and ape certain of his habits, for I feared the blows of his heavy shoes and hands.

"But my hatred for him increased. My being with him was none of my own doing. He had bought me. I was his slave. Yet a more unwilling slave never served.

"And my heart grew lustful for his life, as a lean coyote yearns for fresh-killed meat. Often my sullen gaze met his, and he read my thoughts and cursed me in the rugged monosyllables of his mother tongue.

"I grew strong with the good food and the hard tramping in the open air. My muscles knotted on my body like coiled springs. I was a boy of fifteen, but I was getting to be a man in quick time.

"I listened eagerly to each word he spoke and connected it with the meaning he had signed with his hands and eyes. Some day when I had him at my mercy I would use those words in telling him the wrong he had done me. And when he cursed me I remembered the exact words to use when I should curse him in return.

"He had given me a knife to carry in my belt, and often when I came near behind him he turned his side and watched me until I had passed. Once when I clutched the knife and slipped cautiously behind him he turned and caught my wrist and threw me to the ground. With a hand in my collar he again raised me and beat me in the face with his fist until I fell in a limp heap. When I crawled to my feet he tossed me the knife with a laugh.

"How I hated him! God only knows the extent of my hate.

" 'Do right, greaser, and we'll get along,' he told me.

" 'Greaser;' that's what he called me always. Once in a fit of curiosity I had asked him the meaning of this word. He pointed to the lard-bucket and shook his head, for there is no Mexican word to express its meaning even had he spoken more of the language than he did.

"At last we paused and traveled less. We were into as rough a mountain country as exists in the world. Strange tribes of wild Indians we had encountered who spoke no word of Spanish during our march had followed us for days out of curiosity, their camp-fires gleaming far above us on the mountain-side or far below when we camped at night.

"This gringo man feared nothing. He slept soundly, but a slight movement out of the ordinary would cause him to spring into wakefulness.

"Together we had once wandered into an Indian village at the bottom of a steep cañon. The men were gone and only the women remained. They were pounding corn on stones and doing the camp-work.

"When the gringo signed that he wished food they gave no sign in reply, but started beating the signal-drums for the braves to return. Soon they came running and shouting, armed with long bows and spears. They gathered around us chattering their anger.

"The gringo thrust his way through the circle as if they had been schoolboys. He walked into a hut, took down a gourd of water, drank deeply and passed it to me.

"Coming out, he saw an antelope one of them had thrown to the ground. He bent over it and quickly cut off a quarter. The owner of the game was tugging at his shoulders and some of the others had begun to laugh.

"When he had finished his task he took a keen-bladed knife from his pack and offered it to the brave, signing that he wished to trade. The Indian tried the edge on his thumb-nail and grinned his reply like a young child. Swinging the meat upon his shoulder, the gringo walked away with me close at his heels.

"And now we began searching more carefully the sands of the streams and the rocks of the cañon-sides for gold. The eyes of the gringo shone as he explained to me what this metal was and what it would buy.

" 'Greaser,' he would say, 'we'll strike it rich one of these days.'

"And I knew he lied, for one of these days I would see my chance and sink my knife into his cruel heart.

"FOR a year and eight months we tramped about in those wild mountains, panning the sands of streams, crushing bits of stone, peering up cañons and down cañons at the topography that might contain a high bar or a rotted mother-lode, and between us we found scarcely more than two ounces of gold. What had I to do with gold? I had never seen anything but the little village in which I was born and these rough mountains.

"My ancestors were these same rude aborigines we had encountered, with whom we could speak no word and whom I feared more than I did the rough gringo

with whom I traveled. My ancestors had been tamed and domesticated to labor for the Spaniards as slaves, just as I was being further domesticated and tamed by the gringo.

"My body and actions had gradually bent to the yoke, but my heart and feelings had become more rebellious day by day. Within me was a growling tiger ready to spring and kill at the first chance.

"I had grown to understand each word the gringo spoke and I was able to express what of my own thoughts was necessary for the work of the trail. We spoke little to each other of things aside from the actual work in hand.

"When we stood on the lip of some great *barranca* at sunset, watching the purple and red shades of light painting the depths and walls of the cañons down below, I was touched in my heart by the majesty of nature and felt strange forces surging within me to give tongue to my thoughts; and, watching the gringo as he gazed, I knew he felt the same emotions that I did. Yet we turned to speak of such sordid affairs as hunting a place to camp where the cold winds would not search us out during the night, and of the stock of grub we had in hand. Often we sighted some animal perched high on a cliff and the gringo reached for his long-barreled revolver under his arm and, aiming carefully, brought it tumbling to the ground.

"And I knew that the gringo feared me worse than he did the mountain-lions and tawny tigers that slipped silently through the cañons, than the huge-framed lobo wolves that howled during the nights. He read my thoughts, as I did his, and he watched me with a careful eye day by day.

"Quite well he dissimulated a devil-may-care disregard of me. Many times as I skinned the game with my keen-whetted knife he drew close and turned his back carelessly to me as if by accident, yet I knew should my arm raise he would wheel and kill me.

"He had ceased to beat me now; not that he was afraid to, but because I observed the rules he had taught me with kick and blow and oath. I was as clean a man as he around the camp and with the cooking of the grub and the scouring of the pots. And I washed my body clean and scoured my clothes until they faded from the rubbing.

"The gringo had other suits in his bundle, and shirts, and leather and nails for half-soling the shoes. He had needle and thread and a worbl of useful things in that pack. I had watched him roll and unroll it so many times that I knew them by heart. And I knew he was a man who had been long on the trail and was wise to the things of the trail, and I came to understand that he had worked with the gringos for the sole purpose of buying such equipment as he carried and gave to me.

"Yet in my heart the smoldering coals of hatred glowed with a red heat. I was an animal at the time, unable to reason things out in a rational way, and I still remembered the tears flowing down the olive cheeks of my four sisters as they were led away into slavery, mere children, casting dumb, appealing glances backward at the mother who had given them birth and at whose breast they had sucked life.

"The scary-cries of the old women that the gringos would come had been too true. Well, they had come and I and my sisters were in their toils.

"When such thoughts as these were in my heart and I looked up into the eyes of my master, his jaws set and he looked at me fiercely for a moment and then looked away as if he had not noticed. When I moved in the night his eyes flipped open, and he looked to see what I was about. Many times, after a hard day's work in the streams and on the hike, I thought him too tired to notice, but he always did.

"I have since learned that this is a subconscious part of man that watches over him while he sleeps, and that men in wild places become like tigers sleeping with eyelids scarce closed and with the muscles of the legs tensed to spring. At that time it seemed as if he was a cunning devil with superhuman powers to avoid my hate.

"Eighteen months we remained in the Mexican sierras, and I was a hardened boy of seventeen, speaking with the gringo when necessary in correct phrases of his own language, but keeping my own thoughts to myself. He treated me more kindly and tried to gain my friendship more than once. This cut deep, for I felt he was treating me like an ox which had been broken to the yoke. Some day I would show him what kind of an ox I was!

"Finding little gold, the gringo headed south, taking the eastern slopes of the

mountains just below their summits where the small streams sprang into life. We came into a country which was bare of vegetation, a great high plateau, cracked and broken and covered with lava-beds.

"Game was scarce and we met with no tribes of Indians with whom to trade for corn-meal and dried meat of wild pig and deer. Our grub grew low and we hoarded it carefully, traveling fast for many days until we should reach a better country.

"We were in to the east of Ixlan and heading in the direction of Guadalajara. Our bellies grew lean and our faces grew long from the hard tramping and the light eating. The gringo, a bigger man than I, whacked fair with the few beans and meal; but between us we ate less than half enough for one strong man.

"For twenty days we hiked through this high volcanic plateau with the food growing less and less each day until we called a small morsel a meal for each of us. Water was also scarce and many nights we lay down to sleep with our tongues parched and swollen.

"I was young and my appetite was hearty and I cursed the gringo to myself when my stomach gnawed and writhed within me. But no word of complaint did I make. The gringo also made no complaint.

"But he feared me. Often when I traveled behind he paused for me to come ahead and make the pace. He seemed to read my very thoughts even when his head was turned the other way.

"I was nearly eighteen now and as hard as nails. I often studied my strength against that of the gringo and came to know he was more powerful than I, much more so, and although old enough to have fathered me he was quick as a cat in his slow, ungainly way, his mind and muscles working together in the flash of an eyelid.

"Also he was sure-footed as a mule on the rough roads. Often I slipped and stumbled but he never did. He picked the right spot at the right time to set his foot on stones that rolled an instant after his foot had left them."

THE Mexican paused as he reached into his shirt pocket for a cigaret. Down below us in the valley the coyotes were howling mournfully. The moon thrust two dim horns upward from behind the horizon. The wind soughed through the stunted pine-trees on the hills above. The Mexican stared across at us solemnly as he took quick succeeding puffs on his cigaret.

"AND yet one day he did fall. We had come into sight of the town of San Marcos, miles away, and were hastening in that direction. A stone rolled under his foot and he pitched head-foremost down a bank some ten yards high.

"I ran and peered over. He lay in a limp heap at the bottom. The cliff was of smooth black basalt, and I quickly picked out a path and ran down to him.

"My knife was in my hand as I bent over him. Both his arms were doubled under him like twisted ropes. I knew they were broken and that he was helpless.

"His eyes opened by quick jerks and he saw me kneeling there with murder in my heart. He stared coldly, calmly into my eyes. My tongue clove to my mouth as I tried to utter the curses I had stored in my brain for this hour. I had pictured him cringing and perhaps begging for his life when I had him at my mercy; yet, lying there crippled and helpless, he was his old imperious self. Fear of death was not in him; of that I am quite sure.

" 'Strike!' he snapped from his hard-set mouth. 'Make a quick job of it and go on your way.'

"He raised his head a little so as to expose his throat for the knife and waited for the thrust. Something snapped within me and a strange feeling stole over me. It was like the times that I had watched the sunset and the play of the shadows down in the cañons, or listened to the wind booming through the tall pines during the long nights; a love of the grandeur and majesty of primitive strength and nature.

"This man had been harsh and cruel with me; yet he had been just. Deep down I knew I had deserved his blows and kicks. If he had been severe with me he had also been severe with himself. He had whacked fair, and with his size and strength he could have taken all the grub.

" 'Gringo,' I said, putting my knife back into its sheath, 'you are too —— much of a man for me to kill.'

" 'You're pretty much of a man yourself,' he told me.

"And I saw him smile and the tears came into his eyes—not with the pain which was racking him, but with gladness that I had

proved to be a man. Then his head sagged and as I sobbed on his chest I felt him grow cold and knew he had taken the long trail.

"All through the night I sat there, dumbly sorrowful, brooding over the rough kindness this strange man had done me. Looking back, I saw many times I could have been a help and a real companion to him had my heart not looked with crooked eyes, and then my face was flooded with salty tears and my body racked with sobs. Around me strange animals lurked and peered at the body of my master with phosphorescent eyes as they sniffed expectantly.

"With the gray dawn thoughts that he must be buried came to me. I thought of the church in the village we had sighted from the hilltops, and I thought of him lying there in the churchyard with a tiny wooden cross planted at his head; and I knew that he had died as he had lived, bold and unafraid, and had he known he would have wished no churchyard for his last camp.

"Thinking thus, I began to dig a grave at the foot of the cliff with my knife, scooping the earth out with my hands. My hands grew raw and my finger-nails bled; but I dug until evening, and the hole was as deep as my shoulders and as long as his body. Then, lifting him to the side of the grave, I got down in it and lowered him to rest.

"Under his head I placed his blanket-roll and with my own blanket I covered him over. Then with tears blinding my eyes I began to scoop back the dirt which buried him forever. On top of the mound I rolled huge stones to keep off the coyotes and the lobos. Then as the darkness fell I ran toward the village.

"FOR days I hung around San Marcos like a dog that has lost its master. The peons were not like my own kind now, but like a different race. I slept in the corrals in the straw where the pack-mules are fed for the night and where poor drivers slept after their hard day's toil. They spoke with me and I kept silent, and they tapped their foreheads that I was loco and without power of thought.

"At last when I had grown lean and gaunt from the continued starvation I sought out a job with the owner of a maguey plantation at nine Mexican pennies a day. All day I plowed yokes of oxen in the fields, turning over the packed soil for the young plants, eating soured beans and musty *tortillas* with the other laborers.

"For a month I stood this treadmill like a work-beast in the yoke, like one of the mangy oxen I prodded to drag the plow. Then I stole a blanket from the line back of the planter's house and crept out to take the stage-road for Guadalajara.

"Down across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec I came, through Central America. I worked on the canal with the silver-roll employees until I had money for clothes and a fine outfit.

"I heard men speak of Alaska, and I worked my way up the west coast and into the cold country of the north. I came back through the Canadian Klondike and over the nine-hundred-mile trail to Edmonton. I came back down into the States and prospected in the Rockies.

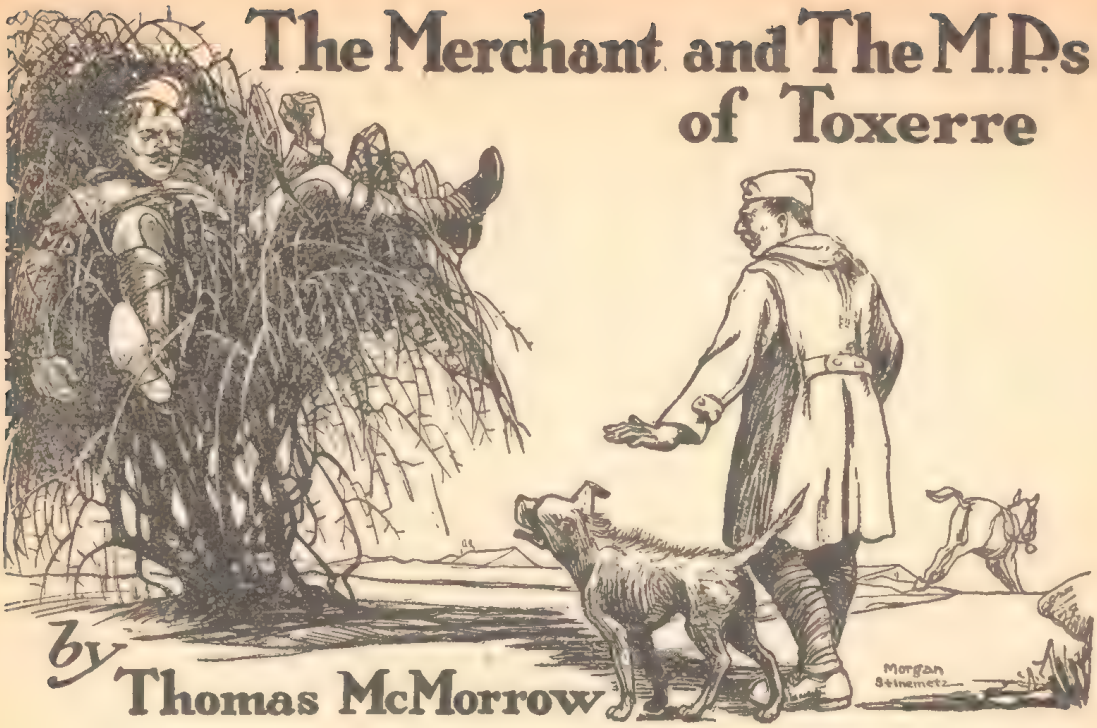
"I have traveled the North and South American country over from end to end. The spirit of the gringo has got into me. I peer into stream-beds and crush bits of stone; I look up and down cañons for sign of a rich high bar. Unrest is in my heart. Some day I'll strike it rich."

THE greaser paused and flicked at his cigaret as he looked across at us. We stretched forth our hands and grasped both of his.

"Mex," I told him, "you are a true-blue guy and we are on the same mission. We can take another buddy into our crowd if it's all the same to you."

I turned to look at Rodin, and deep down in throat he vouchsafed his assent. Then the three of us turned into our blankets; for tomorrow was another day.

The Merchant and The M.P.s of Toxerre



by Thomas McMorrow

Author of "Cigars, Cigarets, Chocolates and Bonbons," "Tub o' Lard," etc.

THERE was in the A. E. F., during those dull months following the Armistice, one Scallan, called "the Merchant," a sawed-off, sandy, hard-mouthed runt of a buck private who was made for peace-time soldiering as a hedgehog is for a seat. He hated to drill, would walk up to his knees in mud to avoid passing an officer and saluting, would rather do a month in the guardhouse than an hour at guard-mount and never saw a sentry on post or an M. P. in his path without thinking that the people who put them there knew best, and that it was worth while to explore what it was worth while to forbid. And, having a tongue buttered on one side and rasped on the other, a velvet palm and a hickory fist, this contrary little man walked hither and yon through the shock-charged rules of the A. E. F. at his sweet pleasure and as if they were cobwebs.

He had a vicious brute of a dog that was a creature after his own heart. If you stooped down and patted him on the head, he'd bite your hand off, and when you gave him a good rousing kick he'd lick your shoes and was your friend for life.

The Merchant had taken up with this brute in Buzancy the day the order came to get rid of all pets and mascots. He was bitten at once, on first acquaintance and as a matter of habit, and thereupon he brought down his rifle and started every suture in the animal's ugly skull. A retort so pat impressed the canny beast; he was a misunderstood dog no more, and then and there he adopted the Merchant till death do us part.

He was a handsome enough dog—barring that he was mangy from nose to tail and lacked one eye and one ear—and a well-made animal too; there was no denying that, for every last bone of him showed through his skin. A more gifted beast or one that could be taught more diverting tricks could not be found between the sea and the Swiss frontier—if only the fleas had let him apply his mind to learning.

He was usually to be seen marching after the Merchant with his tail in his mouth or his ear under his foreleg, disputing mastery with the fleas, for this dog had the heart of a lion and never knew when he was beaten. His name was Kamerad.

But even if he did have a blemish or two, as you might say, being hypercritical, his master would not have swapped him for the Great Hound of Tibet and a barrel of monkeys to boot, and he was convinced

that he frightened all other dogs in France. When things fell well with the Merchant, he did not forget Kamerad; he kicked him, as was his way when much pleased, so that the beast often had only the help of three legs at once on which to hobble along. For this he loved his master with all the veins of his heart.

You're not to understand that the Merchant was cruel; no one hated pain and misery more than he. Never a German prisoner passed his billet but the Merchant looked out and saw him and ran to set the dog on him and so take the prisoner's mind off his troubles. And when a hike was ordered and he wanted to be marked "Quarters," he could raise such disorder in the infirmary over a blistered heel you'd think he ran blood like Dead Man's Hill.

Now this Merchant was a sharp and contriving man and nobody's fool, for all his contrariness. He was as deep as a well, bland as syrup and master of more devilment than I could specify for you between now and next sunrise. A strapping little man he was, too, built like a ram, and he would as soon pass you a punch on the jaw as the time of day, and sooner.

A man like that could not be popular. Soldiermen are merry men, and when the top sergeant dismissed them after retreat and their time was their own till Taps, so long as they went nowhere and did nothing, their francs just burned in their pockets to be up and away. The Merchant didn't gamble, had more money on pay-day eve than the personnel officer and enjoyed the feel of a glass of White Mule in nobody's mouth but his.

But greater to the soldierman than good fellowship is courage, and the Merchant had fought in the war like a buccaneer. He had the Medal of Honor, the Croix de Guerre, four pounds of Iron Crosses and a gold something which he said was the star of a field-marshal and which he had cut from an asparagus can. The company regarded him with a mixture of dislike and pride. No other company in the regiment had such a Merchant.

Now one more name and the roster will be correct.

That stretch of mud and sunny France where the company lay was infested those days by a joy-killing tyrant. His servants were posted at every crossroads and beside every tavern-door and lurked behind *sortie* on every station platform. They seized all doughboys holiday-bent and threw them into jails and bull-pens and jugs and brigs. Not the Kaiser in all his glory was detested more by the doughboys than was he. The boldest, men who had run up to machine-gun nests with gaiety and had sprung among Prussians without a glance behind, now stuck close to their billets and shook at the thought of falling into this Bluebeard's clutches, for he had no heart in his breast nor bowels of mercy. He was lord of high justice, the middle and the low, boss of M. P.'s for forty kilos around, and his name of fear was Provost Marshal Lynch.

Sirs, the story is formed!

THAT Winter the A. E. F. was stage-struck. Every corps had its troupe and every troop its chorus, and it was a stupid squad which could not show an imitator of Charlie Chaplin. You could see "A Night in the Guard-house" done by men who knew the business at first-hand, a ballet which would make you sigh and yearn for a brick; the performance was concluded by the subversive spectacle of a sure-enough doughboy brutalizing and hectoring an officer, which always brought down the house with joy. They had costumes, too, and the place to get them was Paris.

Imagine, then, the feelings of the company when, after organizing their talent and engaging their theater for the opening night, they were told that under no circumstances would any more passes be granted that month for gay Paree.

"It's Lynch," said the topper, breaking the news. "He's got the order from corps headquarters, and nothing but an order from there will go. And we can't get it."

"That guy must be bullet-proof."

"Why? He never saw the front!"

"Somebody ought to bring it back to him!"

"Sorry, boys," said the topper, turning to his field desk. "Beat it! I'm busy!"

There was a meeting in Mme. Dumas' *estaminet*, whither the defrauded Thespians went to choke down their disgust with the madame's horse-steaks and frog-fried spuds. Upended then Scallan the Merchant.

"I never been to Paris," he said in his piping voice, "and I never wanted to go before now. But if you'll give me the name

of that frog who sells costumes, and give me the *rue* and the price, I'll get them for you while seeing the dump, and it won't be no extra trouble."

"You'll go A. W. O. L.?" asked the actors.

"P. D. Q."

"O. K.," said the actors joyfully. "You'll be out o' luck if Lynch's M. P.'s get you, but if you can't do it, nobody can. Give the Merchant the money."

"And I'll cover you while you're gone," said the platoon sergeant. "Get back here with those costumes in a week and your time's your own from then till we hit the boat!"

Within the hour the Merchant had struck into the fine white road that led to Toxerre and then to Paris, with Kamerad marching at his heels, his tail in his mouth.

He bore neither pack nor rifle, so that wherever he went he'd look as if he belonged in that district; this was for the benefit of the M. P.'s, who would have picked him up like a flash if they thought he looked like a straggler.

At the time there were thousands of doughboys roving about who had no more license than had the Merchant for leaving their outfits, and the man whose pass and papers were not in apple-pie order soon found himself under arrest. Gone were the good old days when a doughboy went where he would and did as he pleased, so long as he kept within earshot of the growl of the war. No more were mopes sent to replacement camps whence they went in time to outfits better than their own; now the prison farms and labor battalions gathered them in.

It was twenty kilometers to Toxerre, and that's a long walk for a short man and a busy dog. And Toxerre was the headquarters of the terrible provost marshal. There he maintained his bull-pen, a large stockade quite filled with downcast doughboys who had been bagged by the provost's men. The Merchant saw the red roofs of the town in the distance as the sun was going down behind them. He looked about him for shelter for the night, as he dared not enter the town.

But there was not a house nor shed nearby, nor nearer than Toxerre, as far as he could see, for the way they manage in France no houses are built in the country at all; the French all live in towns, going forth each day to till their lands and returning before dark. So the Merchant and Kamerad struck into a little road leading away at right angles and continued in it, watching about them.

Twilight was coming and they found themselves in the midst of a thick woods. There seemed no end to it, and at last they stepped aside and cast about for a length of dry ground on which to lie down for the night.

THEY had not followed a little path far into the forest when suddenly a fine horse, fit for a general to ride on, came clattering by, all saddled and bridled, and away he tore down the road. Then they heard groans and curses that made Kamerad's hair stand up along his back.

The travelers stopped in their tracks.

They looked about and there sat a big man in a thorn-bush.

"Come here!" cried the man in the thorns on espying Kamerad and the Merchant. "Don't stand there catching flies with your mouth, you fool. Pull me out of this and be quick, and be —— to you!"

The man had on fine leather puttees and moleskin breeches, and some kind of insignia shone on his shoulders. The Merchant saw that he was an American officer.

"Did I put you there?" asked the Merchant, approaching. "Speak more polite when you're asking a favor."

"Do you know who I am, you scut?" snarled the man in the bush.

"We don't care for the acquaintance," said the Merchant with rising temper. "Don't be so familiar."

But he was looking keenly at the officer the while, and now he had to clap his hand over his mouth to stop a yelp of recognition.

The man was fat and pale, with bulging black eyes, angry and red-rimmed, and bristling mustaches and thick red lips that thrust out in a pout. Such a man you'd have glanced at in passing and dismissed from your mind with the thought that he was a good-natured fellow, a good liver and a man to let live; you'd have made a woful mistake. He was a cold-hearted martinet who had taken a thankless job because it was safe, and, after the fighting was done and the last poor devil of a doughboy had heard the crack of doom over his frail tin hat, this man had kept the job for love.

He performed his duties without mercy or compassion.

Officers of combatant outfits could remember that, even if their young men acted at times like colts and showed none of the discretion of years, they neither had shown discretion in the grim valleys of northern France, where older and wiser men would have quailed under the whistling of shrapnel. Such officers were proud of their men. "Boys will be boys," they said, though they frowned at boyish foolishness.

But not so this cold and careful man who sat glaring at Scallan the Merchant, for this man was Provost Marshal Lynch.

"What are you laughing at?" he roared. "You'll laugh from the other side of your mouth when I get out of this bush!"

"When you do," nodded the Merchant, surveying the stout branches with spikes that looked like trench knives. "When you do."

Scallan felt with his feet under the bush. It was good springy turf and dry, and he gathered leaves and twigs here and there and lay down on top of them to sleep peacefully, Kamerad and he, stopping their ears to the cries of the man not six feet above them. Unless the man's voice were heard in Toxerre, he might as well have been gagged, for he was dealing now with a person as callous as himself. The Merchant expected no mercy in any event, if military law caught hold of him, and, to do him justice, consideration of common humanity never entered his mind for a moment.

"If you don't pull me out," swore the man in the bush, "I'll have you kept in France for the rest of your natural life! I'll have you put on a prison farm and fed on hardtack and water! I'll make your life so miserable that you'll wish you were shot and done for!"

And so he went on, contriving and planning revenges out of his experience, till you wouldn't want your worst enemy to have a taste of what he promised. And when he gave the least struggle to free himself, the thorns bit into his flesh like teeth, and then he yelled and cursed till the air trembled.

But Kamerad and the Merchant were going happily off to sleep, the former with a last wag of his tail and both with smiles on their faces. The man in the bush looked and saw, and then changed his tune.

"My good fellow," he begged, "I'll give you anything you can imagine and have the face to ask for, if only you'll pull me out of this bush!"

But the Merchant did not so much as open an eye, nor did Kamerad.

"I'll give you a hundred francs, cash!"

The Merchant snuggled his hard little face into the soft leaves, with a sweet snore. Never so much as a word did he give back, nor a hint that he had heard at all.

"My good, kind-hearted, Christian young man," the officer implored, "wake up and think of something you want, and it's yours for pulling me out of these thorns! I'm somebody in this country and I warn you of that, and what I say I'll do, I'll do! What'll you have?"

"YOU'RE a curse," said the Merchant, sitting up and rubbing his fists into his eyes. "Why can't you be quiet? Does nobody want to sleep but yourself? Have you nothing to do but sit in bushes like an owl and pester decent travelers? Stop your infernal noise till I think if there's anything that would pay me for pulling you out of that bush."

The unfortunate officer watched the Merchant's dark face.

"Have you a cure for the mange?" asked the Merchant at last, when he could imagine nothing he wanted for himself.

"I have not," said the man.

"It wouldn't be you if you had," growled the Merchant. "Do you know what is good for fleas?"

"I'll ask my medical officer," said the man. "A better doctor for fleas is not in this country."

"Send for him," agreed the Merchant, and he lay down again beside Kamerad to sleep.

But the man wheedled and wailed so that sleep could not come to the thorn-bush, and the Merchant sat up again, rubbing his eyes in a temper.

"And so you're still at it, are you?" he exclaimed with sparkling eyes.

"For the love of God pull me out of this bush!" wept the man in the thorns. "Have you no heart or decency at all under that dirty blouse?"

"You're the biggest nuisance I've ever met," said the Merchant.

He fell again to pondering. He saw that Kamerad had been aroused, too, and was

passing the time trying to reach his own back-bone.

"You see that dog there?" he asked.

"I do."

"A decenter creature never breathed," said the Merchant affectionately. "But he can't set his mind to sleeping on account of the fleas. You're interested in dogs? Would you believe that those fleas are the bane of his life, and me and him both together can't get him rid of them? I've put powders on to him and the fleas ate them with thanks, and I've washed him in kerosene and they frisked about till he tried to leap into a fire."

The Merchant shook his head and looked for sympathy to the man in the bush.

"The devil's in you," said the man, "you and your filthy dog and your fleas! Will you pull me out of this bush?"

"Be easy," said the Merchant. "We're coming to you now. You must rid that dog of his fleas."

"How?"

"That's for you to say. Take the beast into your lap and pick them fleas off of him, one by one, big and little, old and young, and destroy them."

"But how?"

"That's for you to say," repeated the Merchant, "but I can tell you this: You'll do a good job on that dog for the names you've called him, or you can stay there till you burst!"

"Young man," said the officer, "it's your day now, and I'll pick fleas while the sun shines, but the time will come when you'll wish you'd eaten those fleas and maybe give thanks for a meal no better. Give me the beast!"

The Merchant put Kamerad into the man's lap, and the officer set to work catching the fleas, the long twilight of France furnishing light for the task. When he had done, Kamerad took a parting snap at him and lay down to sleep in peace for the first time in his life.

The Merchant had cut a cudgel and this he thrust into the bush for the man to lay hold of, and, with a pull and a heave and a rip and a tear, he was out of the thorns.

"Where are you going?" asked the Merchant as the officer set off for the road.

"To call out my men, you inhuman villain!" shouted the officer, quivering with rage. "I'll have you run down if you hide underneath the ground, and then you'll wish you never were born!"

"Shame on you," grinned the Merchant. "Would you show yourself in the road with no more clothes on your back than would make a tight pair of socks for me?"

The wretched man clapped his hands about him and found that he was rags and tatters, where he was not bare, from his shoulders to his shining puttees.

"Give me your blouse," he begged.

"I will and welcome," agreed the Merchant. "One soldier should always help another, but, being that I've enjoyed your acquaintance and might never meet up with you again, you must give me a souvenir. Give me that thing you have on your cap."

There was no help for it and the provost marshal knew better than to bargain with his customer now. He pulled the insignia from his cap, while the Merchant shed his overcoat to doff his blouse.

"It'll be small for a man of your size," said the Merchant, advising him. "But there's a fine deep ditch with little water in it beside the road out there, and you could just walk along in that if you don't want to scandalize the neighbors."

With a final grimace and a snap of the jaws that spoke more than a book of orations, the big man wrestled into the blouse. Away he hurried toward Toxerre, hauling down on the tails of the garment as he went.

The Merchant and Kamerad lay down cheek by jowl and fell fast asleep. There they snored comfortably till the morning sun shone green through the leaves, except for the times when the Merchant woke up laughing.

THEY took to the road again in the morning, going forward through the woods so as to make the circuit of Toxerre. The Merchant studied the tree-tops for the smoke of an Army kitchen and Kamerad sprang and cut capers at his heels.

There were two opposing rules concerning kitchens in the A. E. F.; one was written and one was not, and the unwritten one was obeyed. An order had gone forth from Chaumont, armed in the panoply of stamp and seal and signature, strictly enjoining that no men were to eat at Army kitchens except the outfits lawfully entitled

to that rare privilege, and that not so much as a taste of slumgullion or the scraping of a pot was to be given to the straggler or the stranger.

All the cooks and K. P.'s and mess sergeants of the A. E. F. read this order and admitted its necessity and wisdom, and thereafter, as before, the stranger in Uncle Sam's olive-drab needed no other credentials to get the best in the shack and a seat by the fire. Such was the unwritten law: Better that ten good-for-nothings be fed than that one good soldier out of luck be turned away hungry.

So it was that, when the travelers emerged from the woods and saw the outlines of one of Uncle's restaurants across the fields and the twinkle of fire behind it, they made for it rejoicing like hungry men who sight the chimneys of home.

They trotted into the mess-shacks and up to the counter that barred the approach to the sacred domain of the kitchen.

Three K. P.'s were behind the counter, busy after their kind, toasting bread on the hissing field-range and sampling a can of blackberry jam and resting up to roll a cigaret between blows upon a stubborn log. A man with a smear of bacon-grease and soot across his face sat in a chair reading the *Stars and Stripes* and smoking a yellow cigar.

"How about a bite?" inquired the Merchant.

"You're early," said the man. "Breakfast is ready at seven. I guess I can give you something though. Birch, fix him up."

Kamerad had entered the kitchen and promptly sank his teeth in a hind quarter of beef. The cook hurled a bone at his head. It was caught on the fly with thanks, and Kamerad retired through the rear door and behind the wood-pile to worry it.

"Fine dog," said the cook to the Merchant, who was blowing on a tin dish full of thin oatmeal. "Is his leg broke?"

"Not yet," mumbled the guest through a full mouth. "He runs that way, having no hands to scratch."

"There's sugar for your Java. What outfit are you?"

"Headquarters troop from Toxerre."

"Try that jam on your bread. Where are you going?"

"Into Toxerre."

"Have some milk." The cook placed the can before his guest. "I'll send you in on the ration-wagon after mess. The sergeant will be here in a minute."

"What outfit is this?" queried the Merchant when his appetite had slackened.

"The 10—th military police company. What's your hurry?"

"I got to be going. Where's that hound of mine got to now? So-long, cookie, and thanks."

"Here's the sergeant now," cried the cook after the speeding guest. "Wait up a minute, will you? Hey, sarge, here's a fellow wants to go into Toxerre. He can go on the ration-wagon, can't he?"

Four young men wearing the red and black brassard of the Military Police had come through the doorway of the shack, together with the sergeant addressed. They barred the Merchant's flight.

"Sure," said the sergeant, a keen-eyed old regular with a windburnt neck and a red and wrinkled countenance. "Who is he?"

"One of headquarters troop," explained the cook. "He's going in to report."

The sergeant looked the Merchant over sharply, noting with practised eye the absence of the cap and collar ornaments which tell the wearer's company, regiment and branch of the service.

"Headquarters troop," he repeated. "Got a pass, buddy?"

"I'm Captain Peters' orderly," explained the Merchant. "He sent me over to Champigneulles to get him a chicken for supper tonight for him and the adjutant. The pass is all right, sergeant."

"Sure it is," said the sergeant. "I don't know the captain, but I'd like to oblige the adjutant, only our orders today are strict. Sorry, buddy, but we got no discretion. I couldn't pass my brother today, not after the orders we got. I'll send you in to Toxerre and you can get the captain to straighten it out. You want to go there anyway, don't you?

"Take him outside, Jerry, and put him with the rest. Don't worry, buddy, the captain will take care of you."

About twenty doughboys whom the night patrol had collected sat outside the shack, and Jerry added the Merchant to their number with an explanatory word to the guard.

"Take them in to Toxerre," directed the sergeant, appearing in the doorway. "And

don't take this day off, of all days in your life! The marshal is all smoked up about something, and he's ordered that every man found in the district be brought before him today, pass or no pass!"

The prisoners arose like men who were wearied to the bones and shambled out into the road with a glance behind them to make sure that the M. P.'s were on their heels. The shepherds knew better than to lead their flock, for an obvious reason, and, having sympathy for them in their trouble and wise heads on their shoulders, they did not badger them to hurry. The prisoners dragged their reluctant feet along.

"When you get before the marshal, boys," warned the guards, "be sure not to give him any arguments or chop words with him. He's got some temper, the boss has, and he's in a state of mind this morning. Have your story ready and call him sir, and shut up until you're asked to open your trap."

"We're going before the marshal?" inquired the Merchant.

"Sure thing."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Merchant, giving himself up for a lost man now.

THEY entered the ancient town between two low gray towers in whose walls were slits for the use of archers in forgotten wars. The guards herded them up a narrow and dirty cobbled street and into the open square which was the Place de Ville. A large stone building, green with ivy, formed one side of the square. It was the headquarters of the provost marshal.

They found themselves at the end of a great high room, bare of furniture except for a table at the farther side. Military policemen stood about, and behind the table and beside a pleasant-faced officer who was unknown to the Merchant sat the redoubtable provost marshal. He sat sidewise, for reasons best known to himself, and stared dourly at the table. His black brows lifted for an instant as the prisoners shuffled in and fell again over his red-rimmed eyes. The knuckles of one hand tapped monotonously on the wood.

"It's Lynch," whispered the prisoners.

"Who's that next to him?" inquired the Merchant out of the corner of his mouth.

"I know him," said a prisoner more hopefully. "He's one of them inspectors from Chaumont. He went through our outfit last week. His name is Bellinger—'Close-Fisted' Bellinger they used to call him. He's a good skate though; he give our supply officer a bawling out because we weren't getting enough to eat."

"He was with the First Division during the war," vouchsafed another. "With the Twenty-Eighth Infantry he was. That was my old outfit before I went to the hospital."

"Seems to me like the Twenty-Eighth was in Apremont when we were in Montfaucon," hazarded the Merchant.

"That's right. Bellinger got that wound stripe in Lavoye where we crossed the river. He was a second looey them days and was in charge of the chow detail; he got hit by a shell about five miles back of the lines. He's a good skate all right."

The Merchant's brow gathered studiously as he ran over an assortment of lies which he might use for the benefit of the officers behind the table.

At this moment there was an uproar and a commotion on the Place de Ville outside, and a guard backed into the room with a bared automatic in his hand.

"Mad dog!" he cried. "Get back!"

While the words were issuing from his mouth, a long beast sprang through the doorway past the guard, his every tooth shining in his gaping jaws, except those several which had been long since kicked out. He leaped at the Merchant, was kicked away, emitted a howl of satisfaction and then threw himself prone between his master's legs, whence he cocked his one good eye in defiance at the guard.

"Get away!" ordered the guard. "Let me get a shot at him!"

"Put up your gun," growled the Merchant. "He's mine!"

"He's mad!"

"Not so mad as I'll be if you shoot," promised the Merchant. "Not so dangerous, neither. Put up the gun."

"What's all that noise down there?" called the marshal.

"Prisoner got a dog, sir," said the sergeant-at-arms.

The marshal craned his thick neck; his gaze settled on the Merchant and on Kamerad, grinning between his legs. At the sight of them he threw himself back in his chair, folded his arms and smiled for the first time in twelve hours.

"Aha!" he grunted.

"Aha!" he ejaculated again, his two red eyes snapping like two sticks in a fire. "Send that prisoner up here at once!

"So we meet again, my bucko," he growled, when the Merchant and Kamerad stood before him. "Sergeant, take this man away and put him in solitary confinement until I can attend to his case!"

The sergeant stepped forward.

"Just a minute," interposed Captain Bellinger. "What's it all about?"

He was there that day to investigate complaints of just such arbitrary conduct.

"This man is one of the hardest cases in the A. E. F.," said the marshal briskly. "Let's lose no time on him. Sergeant ——"

"Let us hear his latest anyhow," said the captain decidedly. "What's your name, young man?"

"Scallan, sir. The captain remembers seeing me that day in Apremont?"

"You were in Apremont?"

"I was a runner then, and I brought the Twenty-Eighth a message ordering them to withdraw. I gave it to Lieutenant Bellinger. The air was so full of iron you couldn't get a mouthful with a soup-strainer, and the lieutenant took the order and tore it up and says: 'The First Division never retreats! Tell that to whoever sent you.'"

"I don't exactly recall the episode, young man," admitted the pleased officer, "but that's Gospel truth about the First Division!"

"I was sent to the captain again at Lavoye," said the Merchant impudently. "At the crossing of the river, sir. The engineers were throwing a bridge, and the river was full of them floating down. 'Bellinger?' says the sergeant I spoke to. 'Don't look for "Close-Quarters" Bellinger here, boy! You'll never find him more than bayonet-length from the Jerries!'"

"I got my wound there," said the captain with a cough.

He had no memory of these occasions but was very grateful to the rascal before him for reciting them, all the same.

"Well," he smiled, "those were other days. And what's your trouble now, my lad?"

"May I tell my story?" asked the Merchant, giving back glance for glance to the provost marshal.

"Most assuredly! No American soldier is condemned without a hearing."

"I HAD a twenty-four-hour leave of absence, sir, and I was hurrying back to the company, me and Kamerad here, when we lost our way in a woods. It was getting dark and we decided to lay down there for the night, so that we wouldn't wander out of bounds. And then we heard a voice in the forest calling down curses and swearing in a way to make your blood run cold. And we looked under the trees and there was a man sitting in a thorn-bush, where his horse had throwed him."

"What kind of man was he?"

"Stick to the point!" interrupted the marshal with a face like a thunder-cloud.

"And this man in the bush wouldn't let us go by and about our business as we wanted to do, but kept nagging at me to pull him out, promising to keep me in France for the rest of my natural life and feed me on hardtack and water. We got to arguing.

"One word brought on another, bad to worse, and finally we made a bargain. And I told him if he would take Kamerad here, who is bothered by fleas, and would pick them fleas off of him, one and all, that I'd pull him out of the bush."

The Merchant stopped to draw breath and glanced blandly at the marshal, who was turning green, being nearly stifled with rage.

"He was a reasonable enough man and said right away that one hand washed the other and that one soldier should help another, and so he set to work and done what I asked. And I pulled him out of the bush. But the thorns were strong and the bush held on to him like his skin, and when I finally drew him out he left half his clothes behind. At that I gave him the blouse off my back to cover him and he gave me a silver thingumbob off of his cap for a souvenir."

The Merchant felt in his pockets.

"What kind of man was he?" repeated the captain with a grin. "Was he a Frenchman? An American? That's the queerest bargain I've ever heard tell of."

But at that there came a strange sound, like the last howl of a man being strangled by robbers. The Merchant looked up from his quest, and Kamerad looked up, and the guards and prisoners and attendants looked up, one and all. The terrible

provost marshal was laughing as if he had heard the wittiest story in the world.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" he laughed. "No more of that story, upon your life! It's the most ridiculous thing I've heard in France!"

He threw himself forward on the table and picked up a pen.

"Where were you going, young man?" he demanded.

"To Paris," said the Merchant, looking him in the eye.

The pen scratched over the paper.

He handed the slip to the Merchant.

"Show that to your commanding officer," he said, "and tell him from me that he has no power to grant pass or leave of absence outside the district where his outfit is billeted. I should send you back under arrest, for you're A. W. O. L. right now. But, seeing that you've told a straight story, I'll let you go back by yourself. Have you read that?"

"I have," said the Merchant, looking up from the slip.

"And now," said the marshal grimly, "to settle the question hereafter, in case we get a complaint, what manner of man was it you found in the thorns?"

"It was getting dark," said the Merchant, "and I didn't get a very good look at him, but he was a little red-headed runt of a man no bigger than myself, with a mole over his left eye, a finger missing from his left hand and two gold teeth that only showed when he laughed. I think he was an officer of one of those Siamese labor outfits and he wore——"

"Be on your way," said the provost marshal, "and take this with you. If I ever lay eyes on you again or hear about you—good, bad or indifferent, coming or going—you'll find that every curse that man put on to you will come true! You've got the description of the Siamese officer, stenographer?"

"Yes, sir."

The Merchant executed a snappy salute, placed his right toe about six inches to the rear and slightly to the left of his left foot and did a neat about face. He left the chamber at a cadence of one hundred and twenty to the minute, eyes directly to the front, head erect and chin slightly drawn in. It was a fine martial effect which was spoiled only by Kamerad's being behind him.

Ten minutes later a dark little man was kicking the kilometers behind him on the road to Paris. At his heels ran a brute with his tongue hanging out contentedly, and peeping from his pocket was a pass that opened all roads for forty kilometers around and commended the bearer to the good offices of all M. P.'s. The pass was signed by Provost Marshal Lynch.

The Second Fall*

by S.B.H. Hurst

Author of "Bumps," "Erased," etc.

ON THE twenty-second of August, 1920, the following warning was published, as an advertisement, in every newspaper of importance in the world.

A Warning to the People of the World

For the second time of which we have any record, mankind is threatened by a dreadful and horrible form of danger. In order that the danger may be understood and appreciated, I will first tell what I know about its history, about the danger itself and about the first occasion of its descent upon a helpless people.

All legend has a basis in fact. From the world-wide legend of the deluge, Prof. Vail deduced the cause of the Glacial period. I believe Vail was correct but, even if he was wrong, his method was not. I mention this to enable you to reason about what follows.

In the Bible, in Genesis, is an account of what is known as the fall of man. The story tells how man was driven from the Garden of Eden and how an angel with a flaming sword kept him from going back.

Just what does this mean? Many people choose to accept the story literally, but thinking men are not among these. Yet, to use the language of Herbert Spencer, there must be some reason for the story, something must have occurred which eventually, repeated from one to another, became legend. And that legend must have a basis of truth. "However wild," to quote Spencer, "the story seems, there must have been something which caused it." There was something and that something again threatens the world, again threatens to drive us from our "Garden of Eden," from our civilization!

Deep within our memories lies the memory of what actually occurred when man was driven from the Garden, and instinctively we dread it and shiver at the flaming sword.

And the something we all fear—some of us more than others, as our intuitional faculty may be developed—is hypnotism. The Garden of Eden is the poetical, legendary name given to an ancient civilization from which, ages ago, man was driven. Do I hear some wit ask: "What about the apple?"

The apple had a good deal to do with it because the people of that ancient civilization were hypnotized, and the apple is the legendary reference to either a glittering crystal ball, a revolving mirror, or anything else that may have been used for flashing light into the eyes of the victims, to assist the hypnotist, who, afterward, if necessary, rehypnotized any who attempted to get

* *This is an "Off the Trail" story. See second contents page.*

back into the Garden. Hence the flaming sword—the flashing, revolving mirror.

To try to prove all this would take a long time and would not convince. Those who will ever believe what I now write will believe it now, intuitionally, without further proof. Consequently, I may appear to make unproved assertions, but I tell you, very solemnly and upon my word of honor, that I know I am telling the truth.

Action and reaction are equal and opposite. Like the waves, peoples rise and fall. In addition, there are convulsions, catastrophes.

The men and women of that ancient civilization — that Garden of Eden — were driven out into the fields to die. By fields I mean waste places. Some few survived; from these we have descended. After that the masters—the hypnotists—grew old and passed their knowledge to their children. They were a relatively small number. Intermarriage helped to weaken them and by and by they forgot the lessons their fathers had taught them. Through natural causes, their own civilization decayed and fell and was forgotten.

Meanwhile, hardened by the struggle for existence and gradually learning—for it must be remembered that the children of the hypnotized people would not inherit this acquired characteristic, would not be born hypnotized and would wonder, perhaps, at the stupidity of their parents—the outcasts from Eden, the descendants of those outcasts, had grown to power and become civilized. Action and reaction went on, civilizations rose and fell, but no other such fall as is mentioned in Genesis took place.

Still, men remembered dimly, and there arose—groping dimly for the power—the priest class. This class was common to every civilization and it sought to control the minds of its fellowmen. Hypnotism was partly rediscovered, but the priests knew instinctively that something was missing. This missing something they called, among themselves, the "lost word."

They had never heard it, neither had their own ancestors—the descendants of those who had the word were all gone—but they knew they lacked something. In other words, it was to the priests of Egypt, say, a long and difficult task to hypnotize even one sensitive subject, when what they really wished to do was to hypnotize men by hundreds.

The "lost word," then, of both priest and secret society—an offshoot of the priests, as is shown by its ritual—was the word-power to hypnotize and control the minds of thousands, which had been done at the first fall. It was the ability to make hypnosis infectious and contagious. I use these words because there are no others that convey my meaning.

Again this power to hypnotize thousands as easily as one has been rediscovered. The world lies under the danger of it, under the danger of another fall, of being again driven from the Garden of Eden which we call civilization!

You will ask me how I know this and I will tell you.

Years ago, when a young man, I went out to India as a member of the secret service. In those days British women who had been captured during the mutiny were still living, hidden away by their native captors. To find these women or their place of captivity was something every secret service man wished to do, but upon which task he was never detailed. The government had spent thousands to no avail, so what was the use of an individual's trying?

But I persisted and eventually I found the place of their concealment. It was underground and there, also, I found the only woman I ever loved. (My reference to such a sacred, personal matter is surely evidence of my good faith.) I rescued her—she had been captured when a baby—and took her before a meeting of some of the highest officials in India. The great problem was solved at last.

Then, for many years, I forgot all about it and forgot I had even met the woman I loved.

But I found in my pocket a rude sketch of people sitting around a long table, with their names written against them. I knew I had made this sketch but I could not then remember making it. Persevering, however, I did remember. This was what happened:

I had taken the lady before the officials and, while she was telling her story, I had made the rough sketch. Suddenly, an old native whom I had seen underground entered the room. The impertinence of the thing can only be understood by those who know India. This old native first hypnotized us all, by merely flashing a large diamond at us when we were not thinking, and

then told us to forget everything that had occurred. But for the sketch, I never would have remembered and I would have been saved a deal of mental torture, for I never again saw the woman I loved.

This experience set me to studying hypnotism, and the first thing I noticed was the extreme ignorance of European and American hypnotists as compared to Indian.

No American or Englishman could have duplicated the trick which that old native played upon the council, for instance, or could have compelled us all to forget such an important matter. He forced the highest officials in India to become traitors without their being aware of it, for I was the only man ever to remember what I had been ordered to forget, and I finally revealed the underground place to the government.

In my study of hypnotism, my attention was drawn to the "rope trick." In this trick the conjurer uncoils a rope from about his waist and throws it into the air, where it remains upright like a stiff pole. A boy then climbs up the rope. In some cases he continues climbing until he disappears in the sky, taking the rope with him; in others he slides down the rope and the conjurer recoils it around his waist. Both cases depend, obviously, upon group hypnotism—the skill of the fakir, or the money paid him, determining whether the boy disappears or not.

When I first went to India, any conjurer, almost, would do the trick for a few rupees. When the King of England was crowned at Delhi he offered ten thousand pounds to any one who would perform the rope trick. In spite of the amount of money—more than any native conjurer could earn in a lifetime—no one offered to do the trick. Why?

My efforts in the direction of hypnotism had brought me to the notice of a group of natives of India, and these kidnaped me. They treated me well enough, although they used violence when I tried to escape. They pretended they wanted me to become one of them, but I discovered that they intended hypnotizing me as soon as they could catch me off my guard.

These men had carried natural science far beyond Europe or America, and they admitted to me—never thinking I would escape—that they had rediscovered wholesale hypnosis and knew how to make it infectious, as it was used in the fall mentioned in the Bible.

They lived underground in a series of grottoes under a tumulus covering the ancient resting-place of Alexander of Macedon, and they were the actual descendants of the old priests of Egypt. For centuries these priests had sought the "lost word" and now it had been found.

I may say, in passing, that the existence of this great school has been known for a long time. It formed the basis of certain books written in America. But its real occupation was not known until I learned it. The head of these men told me that they intended to conquer the world by hypnotism, but he would not say what the hypnosis would do to its victims, except that it would not kill them at once.

My belief is that it will cause the men and women of the world to lose their minds, so that civilization will fall, leaving the Indian clique masters. This is what I think happened in the fall recorded in Genesis. And all to gratify the craze for mental dominance! But that is priestcraft all over!

I was also told that exhibitions of the rope trick had been stopped by the order of these people, because it gave others than themselves an opportunity to study group hypnotism. They were too near to the consummation of their wishes to take any chances. I escaped and now I am telling you my story, giving you my warning.

The danger is terrible. Here is the antidote, the antitoxin. Repeat firmly the following words—whether you believe me or not—and firmly believe them when you say them. Do this continually until you know—and you will know—you are safe:

"I am myself, a man. No mind can dominate mine. I am. I am. I am master. I am master. No other mind can control mine."

The form the words take is not as important as the conviction with which they are uttered. It may take a month, or even longer, depending upon the individuality, to become immune; but I promise you immunity if you will follow my advice.

This is truth. I have nothing to gain. My warning is sincere.

Arrest all natives of India and deport them. They are scattered all over America and Europe. They pretend they are afraid to go back to India, afraid of the British Government. That is not true. These Hindus, natives of India, are in America and Europe to hypnotize the people at a

given signal. Their pretended fear of the British is childish, an excuse.

They also claim to be working for the freedom of India. How do they expect to get it in America? Do they expect America to fight England as the North fought the South, India's freedom the cause? No! They lie. India, in the mass, does not want freedom. Beware of the Indians. Don't trust them. They are your enemies, the enemies of civilization, and all are skilled hypnotists, waiting the word to begin the Second Fall! SINCLAIR, of Calcutta.

THE world read and laughed. The comic papers played it up, and caricatures of Sinclair's warning delighted the multitude. It became known that Sinclair had once used opium and "Sinclair's pipe dream" became a trite saying. He was compared to those peculiar prophets who every now and then predict the end of the world. His translation of the story in Genesis was called blasphemy by many, and this had perhaps more to do with the disregarding of his warning than any other one thing.

The professional psychologists—those scientists who contradict one another at a trial, from the witness stand—howled that it was impossible to hypnotize the whole world, impossible, even, to hypnotize a hundred people at once. They wanted Sinclair to tell them how it was done. He replied that he did not know, but that he believed that extremely sensitive subjects were picked out and these were intensely hypnotized, and that their condition then spread, like a panic in a theater when some fool cries, "Fire!"

The psychologists laughed again and asked how these sensitive ones were discovered? And when Sinclair attempted to explain that he did not pretend to know, that it had taken ages for the Indian clique to discover the method, the professors crowed loudly from their dunghills of ignorance and filled the air with the discordancy of their mechanistic platitudes. It never seemed to enter their heads that Sinclair's life history was in his favor, that he had nothing to gain. No, they said he had been "hitting the pipe" again.

The Hindus in America wrote to the newspapers, claiming that Sinclair's warning was just a trick of the British, whose agent Sinclair was, to rouse public feeling so that the Hindus would be deported. They, however, "trusted in the justice and love of fair play of the American people."

And America believed the Hindus, gave them their sympathy and damned Sinclair. Carlyle's statement regarding London might have been applied to the world at large: "There are some hundreds of millions of people, and they're all fools!"

But there is little profit in telling how the world received the warning, for, in spite of the immense sums Sinclair spent in advertising, his words soon ceased to interest. The world said that Sinclair was crazy, that if he wanted to throw his money to the newspapers, that was his affair, but that he ought to be locked up.

Personally I believed every word of the warning—which is why I am writing this now—and religiously repeated the autosuggestive words until I felt certain that no Hindu could hypnotize me, even if I happened to be off my guard.

I should explain that our psychologists said that no man could be hypnotized against his will. As if the Hindus would first inform a man of their intentions and then perform! As a matter of fact, they had carried hypnotism so far that they could hypnotize any man, even if they had told him what they were going to do, unless he had made himself immune, as I had.

And now, by showing you to the best of my ability what happened in Seattle—taking that city as a cross-section of the world—I will try to picture for you, in words, the Second Fall, which I believe actually paralleled the fall meant by the allegory in the Bible.

Listening to my friends discuss Sinclair, it was borne upon me forcibly that the world has always stoned those who would save it; and, while they all said in their ignorance that to hypnotize the entire world was impossible, I never heard one attempt to explain why it was impossible.

There had always been a fairly large number of Hindus in the city, but within a few weeks after Sinclair's warning this number increased. They came into Seattle from the country districts where they had been pretending to look for work. The farmers saw no more of them. The significance of this will shortly appear.

They were as popular as ever, for the brainless twisters of the lion's tail felt a protective interest in them and actually believed they were hurting the British Empire

by being friendly to these black devils. And so Sinclair's warning became such a stale subject that even the comic papers ceased to refer to it. Having exhausted all his funds in futile effort, his advertisements no longer appeared. Both the man and his warning were forgotten; they were no longer news.

Then, from some unknown source, he obtained enough money to insert one more warning, a brilliant piece of reasoning:

Because of the comparatively small number of hypnotists, as I have tried to explain before, the hypnosis has to be spread by sensitives, the amount of spreading being determined by the virulence of the hypnosis—the strength of the hypnotist and the sensitiveness of the subject being the determining factors of this virulence. No two spreaders are likely to be the same in this respect, but the hypnotists have only to inoculate a sufficient number of sensitives, the number being calculated upon the average of individual spread.

I have learned that this infectiousness can not be controlled in regard to time. That is, the hypnotists have no control over the infectious hypnosis, once they start it on its terrible course. Consequently, they will be compelled to work upon the people in sparsely populated parts of the country, after which they will hurry to the cities where the dense population will enable them to hypnotize large numbers in a short space of time.

Unless they worked this way, since they can not control the time between infection and outbreak, the hypnosis would warn the world of its presence by beginning to affect the people first hypnotized, before the hypnotists had time to hypnotize the remainder.

I am inclined to think that the hypnotists have already attended to the people in the country districts, and I urgently warn every one to repeat continuously the words of the antihypnosis I have already given out.

But even Sinclair did not dream of the horrible form the hypnosis was to take, of the vile suggestion the hypnotists enforced upon their victims; although he had warned us that he believed the hypnotic condition would be permanent—that is, once a person was hypnotized, he would remain hypnotized for the rest of his life.

And did the world appreciate Sinclair's last altruistic effort on its behalf? It did not. Indeed, beyond the occasional, casual remark: "I see in the paper this morning that Sinclair had another pipe dream," his last advertisement made no impression. It seems incredible, does it not?

OH, THE horror of the discovery! The people went to bed one night, after a normal day of business and recreation, with, as I said, the warning of Sinclair a stale subject, and woke up to the horror of realizing he had told the truth. Then the people besieged him for advice. In fact, before the business day of Seattle was due to begin—while the majority of our citizens were quietly eating breakfast, ignorant of what had occurred—the governments of an alarmed world were telegraphing Sinclair, asking his help.

Most of my acquaintances got their first glimpse of the terror when boys began to run through the residence districts, crying extra editions of the newspapers. I doubt if one was sufficiently calm to finish his interrupted meal.

But Sinclair could only say, as a man might talk to a condemned felon for whom there was no hope of reprieve, that he could do absolutely nothing. The only way of immunity lay in the antisuggestion he had advised, using either his words or some like them. Unless immunity had been achieved by the autosuggestion, it was too late to do anything. One might hope, but it was as well to be prepared for the worst.

And what a "worst" that was! For what a terrible certainty was the world compelled to wait! For, that morning, America and other parts of the world had awakened to discover that the people in the country districts were no longer human. They were animals. That is, they had been so thoroughly hypnotized into believing themselves to be sheep, that they had apparently taken on every characteristic of sheep, with the exception, of course, of their bodily shapes.

They had begun by tearing off their clothes and throwing them away. The light of intelligence had left their eyes, which now seemed soulless. They had sniffed about until they found grass, which they had begun to eat. In short, in mentality, in all but shape, they were sheep. They could not be coaxed back into their houses; they struggled against attempts to

clothe them—struggled, not fought, for the descendants of the ancient priests of Egypt had made certain of their mental dominance by giving their victims all the docility and timidity of domesticated sheep.

Doctors were helpless and so were the once domineering professors of psychology who had said the thing was impossible. And very soon, dreading their own end, the people who were trying to minister to the first victims of the hypnosis left them alone, left them to be sheep.

It is very difficult to put this thing into words so that you may see the world as I saw it that day, for words do not express emotions; they merely sketch them. I have tried to compare our condition to a plague epidemic of the Middle Ages, but that will not do, for even the ignorance of the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries had some sort of defense against the dread disease, while we had none.

And, again, every one was not doomed to plague, while in our world none had hope, except those who, like myself, had followed Sinclair's advice; but, since I have heard of no other man who did follow that advice—and all this happened fifteen years ago—I am very much inclined to think I was the only man in the world who dared hope. I was sure. There was even a horror in feeling safe among all those poor, doomed people, and you may be sure that I did not speak of my immunity.

The Post-Intelligencer posted a bulletin on its office window to the effect that Sinclair had been shot and killed by an unknown native in Calcutta that morning. That was an added reason for keeping silent about my safety, for there were numbers of Hindus in Seattle that day, even if we saw none.

In a sense, Seattle gave me the impression of a city expecting an invading army. Business, of course, was at a standstill, and thousands went about looking for a restaurant where they could get breakfast. Some of these hungry ones asked why the mayor did not do something, organize feeding-places. But man had no thought of organization, no thought of anything but his immediate desires and, most of all, he desired safety.

Then, early, came the news that the town of Ontario, California, had gone the way of the country people, and we felt it creeping in upon us. Men armed themselves and banded together to find the Hindus who had done this thing, but they never found a single Hindu. I don't say that the Hindus were capable of suggesting to their victims that they, the Hindus, were invisible, although it is difficult to set a limit to their power, but it seems strange that none were found when hundreds sought them.

Then came the news that whole sections of America, Europe—of all the world—were succumbing to the dread. The papers printed their last bulletins—got out by the editorial staffs, the pressmen, lacking the sustenance of a higher mentality, having quit—and civilization, as a functioning machine, ceased entirely to be.

WE WAITED, in Seattle. Even with the knowledge that I was immune, I felt as if I were dreaming some awful dream from which I would presently wake, safely in bed. To the rest of humanity, who had laughed at the notion of a few words being worth while, those last few hours must have been truly awful.

The worst of it was, from one important view-point, that all religious faith collapsed under the strain. To men who had believed in the second coming of Christ, to men who clung to the idea of a benevolent deity, to those who spoke of God as a father—such men had not believed it possible that God would allow such a débâcle.

The Great War had severely tested the belief of the majority, but with its ending mankind had swung back into the same comfortable way of saying its prayers and going to church. God had shown His hand; the Allies had won. But this, this end—and such an end!

Had it been death, merely death, it would have been nothing by comparison. Man can fight death to the end and never admit its victory. But to lose one's mind—worse, to lose one's identity and became a beast! Surely, devilish ingenuity could have devised no more dreadful torture than the waiting for what we knew would come.

Many weird and terrible scenes were enacted during those last hours, for the waiting was a revelation—was as a searchlight thrown upon what had lain hidden in the minds of men. It is only possible to write of the less dreadful. At the University of Washington, for instance, certain crazed students lynched a professor who had been

peculiarly sarcastic about the warning of Sinclair.

The word brainstorm was most apropos. Just as in a cyclone the wind shifts suddenly to the opposite point of the compass, so did the mind of man jump immediately to an opposite conclusion. A mob of workingmen brutally assaulted a leading minister of the Gospel and would have succeeded in killing him, but for the efforts of a number of his church members, because he had called Sinclair a blasphemer when the latter dared to say that the Word in Genesis should not be taken literally.

Mobs went about expressing similar incoherent reasons for violence, the less intelligent feeling, somehow, that it was their duty to avenge Sinclair.

"He was a good guy," they said, "who had been badly treated."

A labor newspaper went foaming about the streets—one sheet—to the effect that capital had in some mysterious manner worked against the man who had done all he could to save humanity.

Looking back, I feel that one of the most horrible features of the débâcle was the light its coming threw upon the human mind. It was as if the deeps of the ocean had been stirred for the first time since the world took form, showing horrid monstrosities to my disgusted view. All the baseness, the crude lack of reason, all that something, which, so long unseen, had worked against the evolution of man, all the convention and suppressed atavism frothed to the surface. And there was hardly an effort made to stop this obscene exhibition of the real.

Just as the victims of the hypnotists had thrown aside their clothes, so did the lower type of man throw away all restraints; and, with restraint gone, with self-respect and authority scattered by the wind of fear, the lesser natures treated us to the spectacle of an orgy of beastliness, sufficiently vile, almost, to make us thankful to the Hindus for ending it all.

Civilization had been built upon a foundation of slime, and with its collapse the slime overwhelmed it. It was easy to predict the next manifestation. From a craze for violence, for homicide, the mobs swung into a medly of laughing hysteria which it tried to imagine indicated bravery. The rottenest form of humor was good form to the multitude, was supposed to indicate indifference to the coming fate.

Thus, down through the various grades to the beginning, religion and vice found once again their affinity; the last flower walked with its seed. I will draw a veil over man's indecent worship of generation, only mentioning that during his last hours he lacked the modesty of the dog.

So that dreadful day passed. And when the sun was setting over the Cascades, the tide of hypnotism reached the large cities. That sunset over the mountains was one of the most beautiful I have ever seen.

The Federal Government had apparently been stunned.

It had done nothing, nor had it tried to do anything.

I do not think any one hoped, although the churches were well filled with praying people. This manifestation of fear was, at any rate, more pleasant to witness, if equally illogical, than the beastliness of the others. And now, leaving the general, we will look at the particular.

AS I told you, from the first my belief in Sinclair was responsible for my immunity, but I had a friend who did not believe.

It is interesting here to note how religion has clung to the dim memory of salvation through belief. This must have had a basis in fact.

Well, when Sinclair first published his warning, I went to this friend's office. He was a doctor, a man of intelligence, and his name, although that hardly matters, was Fecpik. He specialized in internal medicine.

I began by asking him what he knew about hypnotism, and he admitted knowing almost nothing because it was not in his line. Then I asked him what he thought about the warning and he laughed.

"All rot! To say that the entire world can be hypnotized is absurd. Such a thing is impossible!"

There was the pity of it. Intelligent men would admit in one breath that they knew next to nothing about hypnotism and in the next would say that Sinclair was crazy, knowing that Sinclair had studied the subject at its fountainhead for the greater part of his long life. Sinclair was then nearly seventy-five.

Men were too prone to express opinions concerning subjects that they had not looked into. Our senators and congressmen

did this so continuously that we almost expected them to do it, but when an intelligent man like Fecpik fell into the same error it meant danger to the balance of humanity.

So, as I said, my old friend laughed at the warning and laughed at me for expressing belief.

"You have that curious, if interesting, type of mind," he went on, "that loves to believe what the rest of us don't, such as the notion that Bacon wrote the plays of Shakespeare."

After that I dropped the subject and talked medicine—I learned what little I know from Fecpik—and I did not see him again until the last night, shortly before sundown, when I met him outside the Cobb Building, where he had his office.

"Hullo," he greeted me nervously. "What are you doing?"

"Trying to find a restaurant that's working," I answered, doing my best to appear indifferent, such being the foolish pride of the human animal.

This about the restaurant was true, because I was very hungry. All the stores and restaurants had closed, and of course no one was working. Yes, I did see one elderly man who was working. He was a deaf-mute but a powerful man possessing sufficient intelligence to work as a night-watchman for various stores. The stores had all been locked as usual and, about six, I saw this man going from door to door trying the locks.

Whether he knew what was coming or not, I can not say. Still, since he could read and write, he must have known. Perhaps some one who possessed enough knowledge to be dangerous had told him that a deaf-and-dumb man could not be hypnotized—some person who did not understand what Sinclair meant when he said the hypnosis was infectious.

I know I am wandering all over the place but, attempting to tell of the end of our world in a few words, it seems impossible to do otherwise. There is very much to tell and my typewriter is clicking out the letters of a dead language.

Language will have to be discovered again, because, even if the once-humans have children who will not inherit the hypnotic state, who will teach those children to talk? I may try but I may not be living. The few Hindus of high caste who make up the hypnotic clique will in time die out, and their language will die with them. This about language is quite an interesting problem in itself.

So, as I said, I was looking for a restaurant and that reminded Fecpik that he had not had dinner. The town was more quiet but there were quite a number of people standing and walking about. Then the doctor remembered that there was a small lunch-room in the basement of the Cobb Building, and we went down there together and broke in the door, making a meal of canned things, with cheese and crackers. I remember we both wanted coffee but could find none, although there was a small gas-stove.

While we munched the food we studiously avoided the subject of what was taking place all over the world, but Fecpik began on it as we walked up-stairs.

I never told him I was immune—I never told any one, not because I was afraid, but because it would have been too cruel. It was too big a shipwreck for one man to boast that he was able to swim ashore.

"Well, you had the right dope," said the doctor.

"It seems so," I replied. "But why aren't you at home?"

It was a natural question, but I was sorry I said it.

"—— !" he blurted out. "I can't stand it to look at the wife!"

Then I felt suddenly grateful to God, for I was a single man without kin. It must have been worse than any imagined hell for the sympathetic men who had families.

The doctor and I stood at the entrance to the building, smoking.

"Felt like suicide yet?" he asked. "There have been dozens, you know."

"No," I answered, thinking that I would have felt like suicide had I been in his position and known that Sinclair's autosuggestion words would have saved me had I started to say them weeks before, while now it was too late for them to be of any use.

Then, suddenly, I realized that neither Fecpik nor any other man knew that. So far as I knew, I was the only proof of the efficacy of those words and I had told no one, since it would only add to their agony if I did.

"No," I said, "but that gives me an idea. Give me some morphin, will you? I want to sleep tonight."

Without a word he took out his hypodermic case and gave me a tube of quarters. Then he smiled, but his smile was horribly forced.

"Don't go and get the habit," he said, making the last jest of a man famous for joshing his intimates.

I tried to cheer him up.

"It may not get us all," I said as convincingly as I could.

"PERHAPS—" he began and stopped.

He was staring across the street at a cigar store. Two men had been standing there, talking. I say two men "had" been, because those two men were suddenly standing there no longer. With an awful suddenness they lost all but the outward semblance of humanity and virtually lost even that.

They began to gape, as if forced to sleep by some powerful drug, dropping almost immediately to their hands and knees, imitating, to the best of their ability, the sheep they had been commanded to imitate by the hypnotists, believing they actually were sheep.

Yet that is hardly correct, for the word belief implies some power of thought, and these could not think. Perhaps, for a moment before becoming sheep, belief had been with them, but, with the becoming, they were sheep in so far as they could be; mentally they were on the sheep's level.

While they were gaping, they had thrown away every vestige of clothing. You can not imagine how weirdly awful that undressing seemed, in the fading light of early evening and on the open street. Then, fearfully it seemed, they began sniffing as they made their ungainly way along, getting off the sidewalk at once, as if made to by some shepherd dog. I can see no other explanation of their sniffing but that they were smelling for grass to eat.

"My God!"

The doctor, a strong-willed man, immensely wealthy, too, as I remember, began to laugh like a hysterical girl.

"My God, Barney, I'm going!" His voice grew even more shrill. "I feel it coming over me. I must do it! I must! I know I must because —because——"

Here his voice dropped and he spoke as if he had suddenly become aware of some wonderful happiness immediately in store for him.

"Because I was told how contented the sheep are out in the clear air!"

Then, the knowledge of the man and all his experience and understanding fighting furiously against the soothing influence which he knew was luring him to destruction, he screamed:

"No! No! I won't! I won't! Help me, help me, Barney! I don't want to, I don't want to—to— Keep me awake, for God's sake, keep me awake! I can not—stop—myself."

His voice dropped, as of one sinking into sleep, and he turned his piteous, pleading eyes upon me, while I watched the light of intelligence leaving them.

At the instant of his first cry I had gripped him. I was a more powerful man than Fecpik, although he was taller and heavier, and I held him, shaking him with all my strength, as one would try to keep a man from going to sleep. From the beginning I felt he had a tendency to sink to the ground and that I was forced to uphold him. I saw that shaking was of no use, so I held him, saying as calmly and forcibly as I could:

"You are all right. You will not go to sleep. You are you," and so on, doing my best to prevent the working of the hypnosis.

But, as I said, it was useless. It was far worse than watching a man die, to see those piteous eyes telling me he understood what was happening to him, worse than watching a drowning man who can not be saved. To watch the soul leave his eyes was worse, far, far worse than to see eyes filled with terror. And Fecpik was my oldest and dearest friend.

I suffered agony, in sympathy, and my own strength left me. Gaping vacantly, my friend threw away his clothing and dropped to his hands and knees. Then I saw he was afraid of me. Helpless, I watched him shuffle fearfully away from me, an awful, ungainly sight, for he was six feet four.

And I could do nothing but watch him go the way the others had gone, for when I moved as if to approach him—it, I should say, for there was no longer a man—it showed such fear of me that my agony was increased, while, somehow, I felt that its was also.

THE thing had come upon the city like a clap of thunder. Wherever I looked, I saw what a few minutes previously had been a man or a woman or a child. I was glad that there were relatively few upon the streets. Without caring what happened to me, I swallowed some of the morphine tablets and started to run home.

I had to run. To watch longer the awfulness of the fall of humanity meant I would go mad. I never gave a thought to myself; the supreme confidence of weeks had made that unnecessary. I had known I was safe too long to bother about myself, but I had to run. I felt an intense longing for forgetfulness. Sleep had no fears for me, and my experience with the doctor had shown me the uselessness of trying to help any one. I swallowed two more tablets, making a grain in all.

Did I say that the sheep-instinct had emptied all the houses? A fear of everything human had been one of the devilish implantations of the hypnotists. The descendants of the old priests of Egypt had had seen to it that their dominance should be complete.

I reached the deserted apartment-house, ran up-stairs, unlocked my door, threw myself upon the bed without taking off my clothes—for, even if the drug had not been working on me, I had seen too much taking off of clothes for one night—and fell asleep immediately.

I awoke next afternoon with all the unpleasant after-effects of opium, which, however, were dissipated by a cup or two of strong coffee. It was strange to switch on the electricity and make coffee with it, when I knew that every man connected with the electric company had ceased to be.

I was sure of having juice for a long time, unless the black devils of hypnotists meddled with the dynamo, which I could imagine no reason for their doing, because I had asked a friend, the chief engineer of the company, a hypothetical question about it. With the certainty in mind that something dreadful was to happen, although I did not dream how really awful it would be, I had asked the engineer how long it would be possible to use electricity if every person but one in Seattle suddenly died and there was no one to attend to the plant. He had told me that everything would go on until some part wore out, which would take a long time because he kept everything in first-class shape.

So I had my coffee and thought of lighting the apartment-house furnace so as to get hot water for a bath. Then I looked out of my window at the deserted street and decided to wait about the hot water, because it did not appear likely that all the Hindus would leave the vicinity until they felt sure no white man or woman had escaped. At that moment I heard the motor of an aeroplane.

For perhaps five seconds hope filled me; some other man had saved himself by using Sinclair's words. Then I understood. The Hindus were going away to some rendezvous, their work done. No doubt they had a large passenger-airship waiting to take them all back to India. But would they not send an occasional patrol? No, once a man had succumbed to their devilish hypnosis he had no chance of recovery. The Hindus would never return, if only because of the pestilence which was certain to follow the many deaths from exposure and change to unsuitable food.

Indeed, with Winter's coming I could see hardly any hope of any of the unfortunate creatures' surviving. Why, then, had the Hindus not killed them all and had done with it? Perhaps they were unable. True, they might have hypnotized every one into committing suicide. But could they do this? Strong as was their hypnosis, could it force millions into doing something which their moral nature decried? I have never decided this question, but I believe the Hindus took the simplest way of killing; I doubt if they were able to do the other. And, besides, they had the satisfaction of making themselves mentally dominant, which, even if it resulted in death, would be more to them than mere killing.

It is impossible for me to get the true Oriental view-point; I can only guess at the reasons of the Hindus. Because, after all, minds that could calmly consider the mental annihilation of the population of the world, excluding their own small clique, would look at things altogether differently. Their lack of sympathy, their childlike delight in destruction, their absurd vanity—all these traits in the Hindu character make me believe that they thought little more of hypnotizing the world than does a child of tearing a butterfly to pieces.

They would not destroy a butterfly, and they might reason that the butterfly was more wonderful than our civilization, because man had made civilization but could not make the butterfly.

The aeroplane had gone, leaving me in a silence like that of a vast tomb. It is impossible to describe that silence, so strange after the noise and bustle of everyday Seattle. Even at night the city had never been quite silent; there had been the distant rattle of an all-night street-car, always some auto, the whistle of a steamer in the harbor. But now, not a sound save the chirp of an occasional sparrow. I am lucky in having accustomed myself to loneliness, but, even so, I feel it.

It's a strange thought, this, that I am the last man of our civilization. The last man! Why? Just because I repeated over and over a few simple words? But why should I be the only man to see the need of those words? Also, why has this dreadful curse fallen upon the world? It will be better to leave such questions unasked. I can never answer them, for one thing, and to dabble in the depths of metaphysics is dangerous. No, if I am to exist in this loneliness and preserve my sanity, I must cultivate a common-sense attitude, avoid introspection and find some interesting occupation. I shall have to break into the public library, because the library people locked it up when they left.

Had any one told me years ago that I should one day find myself in this situation, and had I believed it, I should have expected myself to have most wonderful thoughts—Hamlet-like soliloquies raised to the *n*th power. Now that this thing has come to pass, I don't have them. If anything, my mind is mostly occupied with making sure of my future food supply, with the idea of that bath nudging my elbow. There is also a desire to get out, find an auto and explore the deserted town. One thing, however, I must attend to, and that is keeping track of time. Of course I could find it again if I lost it, but I may as well keep track.

Then, I suppose, the years will pass, and I must do my best to rescue any children that may be born to those who were once men and women. The continuity of the germ plasma will save them from inheriting such an acquired characteristic as the hypnotic state—or will it? If Weismann was altogether correct, it should, but will not the rigors and lack of proper food preclude the possibility of any births? Well, that remains to be seen.

At any rate, I must do my best. If only a few hundred children can be saved and they are not affected by the hypnosis, I may cheat the Hindus before I die and civilization may not entirely fall. But what if those devils have implanted in the minds of their victims the command to kill their young ones at birth? The Hindus were capable of such a thing.

I may as well state here that later on I found conclusive evidence that such a command had been given. Only at the time of birth, through the agency of some very unlikely chance, will it be possible to save and rear a single child as the nucleus of a future civilization.

THE ABOVE WAS WRITTEN BEFORE I TOOK THE AUTOMOBILE RIDE ABOUT THE DESERTED STREETS OF SEATTLE.

Note on the margin of M.S. prior to going out of my rooms—I did not go out that first day, not because I was afraid of meeting any lurking Hindu, but because I did not feel like going out. Indeed, I wished I could find a Hindu or two. I could easily get a rifle and a revolver before I venture into the streets.

I FOUND a fine car just outside the apartment, well supplied with gas, and there was the whole city's gasoline stock to draw upon. At first I had intended to blow the horn as I went along, in the hope of finding another saved man, but I did not, because the mere noise of the motor emphasized my loneliness far too much as it was, and I felt I must train myself to forget that loneliness.

I drove slowly down-town to Second Avenue. I can not describe the weirdness of seeing Second Avenue empty in the middle of a sunlit day, for Second had been Seattle's busiest street. Here and there the window of a jewelry store was smashed, but whether the Hindus had done this to get diamonds—the only things of value they could take with them in the aeroplane—or whether it had been done by crazed hoodlums during the last dreadful night, I could not tell.

I was puzzled at seeing no dead. So

many died every day in a city the size of Seattle that it seemed logical to expect to find some dead bodies about the streets, and I knew that the victims of the hypnosis lacked the wit to remove their dead. Afterward I found that, dying, the poor creatures had crept into holes and corners. I have never quite understood this.

I drove rather aimlessly. Then I thought of the city jail and hurried along to Fourth and Yesler. For a moment I actually entertained the idiotic notion that the people in jail might have remained untouched, but the jail was empty. Evidently the police had let out all the prisoners before the end came.

Rather more aimlessly than before, I drove slowly back to Second. Then, touched by another absurd idea, I turned up Union toward the post-office. I would go to my box and see if there was any mail, as I had done daily for many years.

Of course there wasn't any, but, like a child, I made sure. Then, still like a child that wants to play with whatever attracts it, I noticed the three telephones on the north wall of the post-office building. My hand was in my pocket; I felt for a nickel.

I remember thinking that there was no danger of the line's being busy, as I gravely put the receiver to my ear and dropped the nickel in the slot. I waited, as usual, for central, rather enjoying the absurdity of my action. Then—

"Hello!"

I stood petrified. Surely I was dreaming. I had imagined I heard a voice. Yes, that was it and I would have to be careful about playing the fool this way. When one believes one hears a voice, and the usual voice at that, one is nearing the danger-line. I was about to put the receiver back upon the hook, when I heard again—

"Hello," very faintly and timorously.

There was no mistake. I had heard a voice. But had I? Or was I mad?

The shock of that simple, everyday word was tremendous. *Crusoe's* finding of the footprint on the sand was nothing to hearing a voice in a world where speech was dead. Making the greatest effort of my life, I answered.

"Yes," I said, trembling like a leaf.

There was no reply. So I had imagined it. Had I? I did not know; I could not decide. Frantic with hope and fear—hope that I had found another human being in all that waste; fear that I had only thought I had—I poured a torrent of language into the phone. I don't know what I said; I did not know what I was saying when I spoke.

Then, suddenly, with a chill of fear that swiftly turned into the hot rage of anger with the thrill of anticipated revenge, I thought that some Hindu had stayed at telephone headquarters, expecting that if any one had escaped them the phone would act as a trap. Trap! Well, I would see about that trap. The devil had imitated a woman's voice! I would pretend and I would get that Hindu. I had some vague idea, at that moment, of making sure he should die very slowly.

I stopped talking, my heart going like a trip-hammer; I felt out of breath. Then, very timidly, came the voice again—

"Are you an American?"

"You bet," I answered joyfully, for no brute of a Hindu that ever lived could imitate that voice.

"Oh!" she said.

"Where are you?" I jabbered like an idiot.

There was no reply and I realized that the fact of my being a white man might not be altogether reassuring to a woman who believed she was the last of her sex. We used to read a great deal about the chivalry of white men, but a lot of that was fiction. Besides, the girl must have seen the utter beastliness of thousands of white men when crazed by fear on that last dreadful day. This girl would realize that she was entirely alone with this unseen stranger on the other end of the wire. Could she trust herself with him? What sort of a man was he? And, at best, he was only a man and she was the last woman.

At length, speaking bravely but with an obvious effort, she said—

"I will see you, but remember I have a revolver and I know how to use it!"

Her voice grew firm as she said that.

"Well," I spoke joyfully, "I haven't but I don't blame you for having one. I promise you you won't need it."

I felt that last tribute to my own character was pardonable, under the circumstances.

"I am at the Fourth Avenue exchange," she said.

I hung up carefully so as not to jar her ear; then, forgetting all about the car, I

began to run toward the telephone exchange. Oh, the craving for the sight of a human face!

And then, as I ran—an interesting lesson in psychology, this—I saw that the shock of it all had affected me far more deeply than I had believed. Here I had been thinking how I would try to protect the offspring of the poor, fallen people; I had wondered why suicide had not been suggested, if the Hindus wanted to kill—and so on. All this and more, when all the time I knew quite well, although shocked into forgetting, that no human being could exist on grass. In other words, the people of the world would starve to death, and this was the end foreseen by the hypnotists.

Again, as it was at the first fall, two of us had been saved. What an immense amount of theorizing did that explain concerning the account of man's origin as stated in Genesis.

Yes, though they filled themselves with grass, they would starve. All the history of the race, from Genesis to now, was revealed to me as I ran to the telephone office.

There seemed to be four different parts to me: The part that was running, acting normally enough; the emotional part, with its rapidly beating heart, filled with anticipation and excitement about the reason for my running; then there was the reasoning, theorizing brain part, suddenly remembering things forgotten; and the me part that watched the brain do all these things. I was of even more than four parts. I felt myself to be a congeries of individuals, all cooperating to make up the individual me. There was nothing remarkable about this; every thinking person had observed it in himself many times, but what was perhaps unusual was my awareness of it all and why, in a moment of tense excitement, this should be so noticeable.

FINALLY I reached the office of the telephone company and knocked on the door. I waited but nothing occurred. I went carefully back in memory over the words spoken over the phone. Yes, she had said Fourth Avenue; I had not gone to the wrong place. Again I knocked, rather more loudly, a nervous feeling beginning to take possession of me. What if there were still some Hindus in the city and one of them had overheard our conversation? The girl had said she was armed, but one of those black devils could no doubt steal upon her before she would have time to use the revolver. I began to be alarmed and knocked on the door loudly, careless of lurking foes. Then, with a suddenness that made me jump, the door swung open.

The misogynist who wrote Genesis must have believed that the ancient hypnotists used women to tempt man to look into the crystal, or the mirror, so that he might be hypnotized. But why the need of any crystal? I have spoken of my immunity, of my inner certainty that no Hindu could hypnotize me. I have said that I knew myself to be safe from any hypnotism. Now I must confess myself wrong. I was not immune.

Neither was it necessary for the hypnotist to use a mirror as an aid to causing the hypnotic state, although I realize that the use of a mirror would be of some assistance. All that was needed was the open door of the telephone office and the face of Eve smiling upon my flustered person.

"I had to make certain," she said. "Of course one can learn a great deal from the voice, but it is just as well to use the eyes."

I blushed. Over and above the redness of face due to my sprinting, I actually blushed. No one had ever spoken so nicely to me before. And then, though I kicked myself for this afterward, I remembered with delight that there were no dirty knockers left to throw any more mud, for some men seem to be born to have lies told about them, and I was one of these. So I felt the lady would never have any reason to change her first opinion.

"Will you come in?" she suggested, controlling a smile at my embarrassment.

I accepted the invitation.

The slight stiffness, almost inevitable between strangers, had obtruded between us and the terrible calamity occupying our minds. It had even made us forget for the moment the wonder of our escape, but no sooner were we inside than the girl sat down with a sort of gasp.

"Oh, isn't it awful?" she said, and her eyes filled with tears.

And then I realized how my years of loneliness had blunted me. I had always forced myself to keep a calm mind against the slurs of money-grubbing acquaintances, the contumely of lesser minds, the fight against self-pity, the craving for affection,

the misunderstanding, hunger and so much that would have hurt bitterly had I allowed it to. All this had built an armor-belt around my feelings, so that the calamity of civilization's fall and the terrible end of its people had merely disturbed my intelligence without affecting my emotions. Grief for the people of the world had never even occurred to me. But Eve's tears released all the long-pent sensibilities in a flood, and I almost wept myself.

"The poor things," she went on. "I saw one eating grass in a garden. I'm sure it will make him sick and I suppose the others will do the same. And then—their clothes!" She blushed furiously. "Is there nothing we can do for them? If we don't, some are sure to die from exposure before the hypnotism wears off."

She did not know, then. I thought it well to get her mind away from the worst of it.

"How did you happen to take hiding in here?" I asked.

"I was the chief operator and I stayed," she answered simply, seeing nothing, apparently, in her wonderful devotion to duty. "Then, of course, although I saw none, I was afraid to go out because of the Hindus."

"And——"

I began, then stopped.

"Yes," she said, "it was bad of me, I know, but I was afraid some of the awful men I saw the other day might have been saved, too."

"You used Sinclair's words, then?"

"Yes." She paused, evidently hurt by some recollection. "But I could not persuade anybody else to use them. They all laughed at me."

I had not even attempted to persuade anybody else.

We were silent for a while. There was so much to talk about that we did not know where to begin.

"Do you think there are any others?" she finally asked.

"No," I replied.

"Oh! Why not?"

"Because history will have repeated itself," I said with the certainty of unprovable intuition.

She stared at me silently.

"Just as Sinclair said," I went on, "this thing occurred before and was told about in the Bible. There were only two saved in the Bible story, and from them——"

I broke off in confusion. When I dared to look at her, she was staring out of the window. As a diplomat, I realized I lacked reticence.

But this sort of thing could lead nowhere. We were acting as if nothing had happened, as if civilization were going along in the same old way, and as if the conventions, the restraint between two people meeting for the first time had to be kept up. Things had to be faced, for, while we were hardly on a desert island, there was still the matter of food supply to be taken care of. Some system must be devised, for I was determined that no hand-to-mouth, day-to-day sort of living should be mine.

"We may as well face it," I said suddenly. "We are the only two saved, I am sure, and we must arrange for our future. One thing I will say, however, and that is that although you and I are the last representatives of our civilization, and for that reason would be expected to seek one another's society, if you find my society distasteful you have only to say so and I will leave you and never see you again until you send for me. The decision is in your hands.

"Oh, by the way, should you wish me to go away from you, but are doubtful about your ability to take care of yourself, I will promise to leave a sufficient quantity of food and other necessaries at any place you may care to designate."

And, feeling rather Patrick-Henry-like, I stood up, waiting for the girl to decide.

Her answer, bless her, was distinctly feminine.

"Don't you like me?" she whispered.

Then, the first time for days, I laughed. It was so womanlike, this disregard of all that I had said.

"Well," I replied cautiously, "I—er—you see, I have not known you very long."

Then she laughed and the ice was broken between us—forever. . . .

TEN YEARS LATER

WITHIN easy reach of Seattle by motor-boat are many islands. One of these, in a virgin state of nature, as far as possible from the chance of pestilence, I selected for our home, and there we have been very happy.

In the beginning I brought food and all things needed from Seattle, but now we are self-supporting, growing our own wheat and farming for our needs.

I was perhaps a bit discontented at first, because the realization of ambition had vanished like a bubble just as my hands had grasped it after years of toil and self-denial. But I would not change my lot today for all the fame and money of the old world. The peace, the simple contentment, the wonder at the absence of "the madding crowd," the freedom, the impossibility of any interference in my plans—all this gives me an emperor-like position, impossible in our vanished civilization. But best of all is Eve. Without her, living would have only been existence.

There was lots of hard work, of course, and many problems to solve, but the most difficult problem was one I had never considered until it forced itself upon me. I refer to the preservation of literature, musical instruments and art. Should I take to my island a selection of the best books, music, pictures—the things which made life worth while in the old days—or should I leave them to fall, forgotten, into dissolution? I felt a great responsibility in this matter and for some time we could make no decision. Then our first boy was born and my vision cleared.

When I was young, there was a favorite puzzle-question concerning the Bible. Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. Later on, Cain went into the Land of Nod and found a wife. Holding my tiny first-born in my arms, the answer flashed to me. Where had Cain found his wife, had been our old question, when the Bible had stated there were only four people in the world—Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel.

I suddenly knew, with a surety that brooked no argument, that, somewhere, a small colony of people had been missed by the hypnotists and had been too isolated to become infected. Where those people were, I had no idea, but I was sure they were somewhere. History had repeated itself and Eve and myself were not the only two saved. Just as in the ancient days the people in the land of Nod had escaped so that in after years Cain could find a wife among them, so I knew that the tiny morsel in my arms would one day adventure afield and find his wife. Then I saw my responsibility concerning works of art. What should I save to pass down to the generations yet to come?

Now, where this colony, about which I feel so certain, will be found, I have no idea. Hardly on some distant island, for such would be too far afield for an individual wanderer, and I imagine the Hindus made sure of every island, perhaps after attending to the continents. However, the place is not as important as is the degree of civilization of its inhabitants.

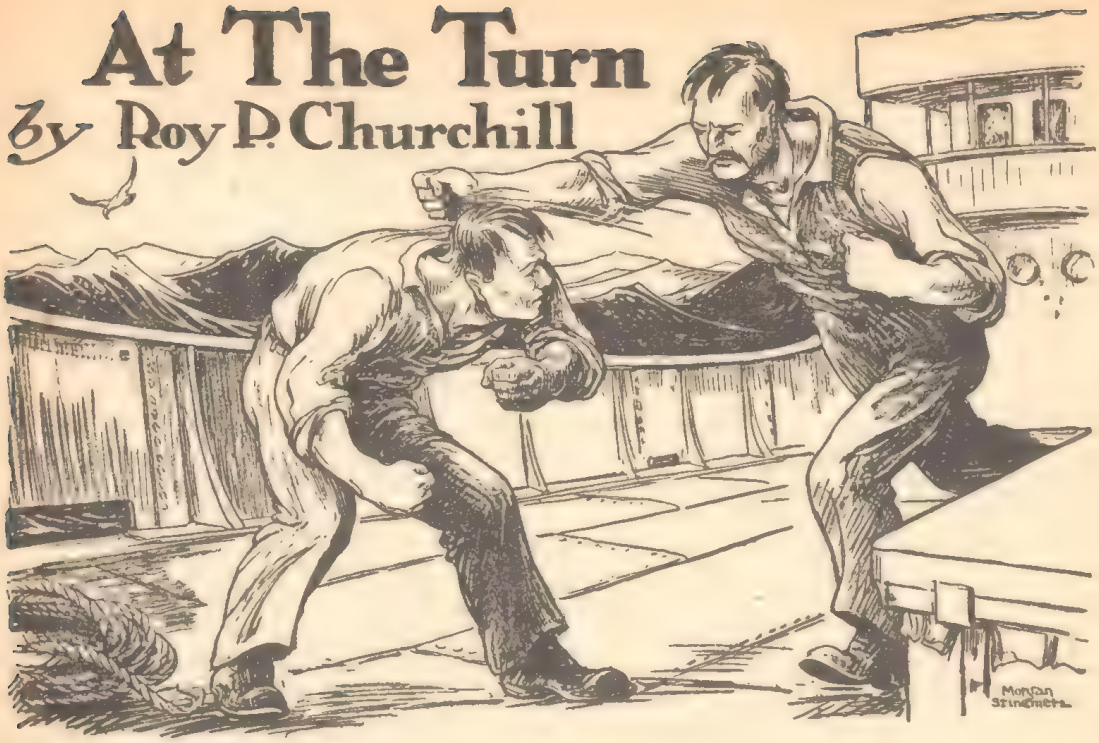
So I came around to my problem. What should I try to preserve for posterity, before the decay of the years took the matter out of my hands? In the end I decided—rightly or wrongly, but we both believe rightly—to preserve nothing. To see to it that our children have good health and good morals, with no taint of superstition to harm, we consider sufficient. We feel that to pass on to our descendants the arts of our old world would inoculate them with the germs of all of that old world's evil, its degrading beliefs and tantalizing hopes. What they themselves may evolve from the conflict of their subconscious memories may be something similar to that from which I would protect them, but that is outside my control.

Of course, there is much I could put in this memoir, much of interest and much of amusement, but we think it better to let a simple statement suffice.

That we are happy, I have said. That the race will start afresh from our son, I have no doubt, as I have no doubt he will find the small group of people from among whom he will choose his wife. I can only hope, both for his sake and for the sake of posterity, that she will be as good a woman as his mother.

At The Turn

By Roy P. Churchill



Author of "Inside and Outside," "The Makings of a Sailorman," etc.

THE Falcons were a queer lot. To begin with, there were not many of them, being usually single sons of single sons, and in their mode of life one family trait stood out as almost a law to the name.

Jim Falcon's grandfather, a captain under Grant and a waster and a spendthrift, had come home a private, thrown away carelessly what was left of his father's money and at middle age settled in a rich valley to gather unto himself finally hundreds of fat acres.

Jim's father had taken this inheritance and scattered it as became the family tradition, beginning close to forty as a section-laborer and ending in his own private car.

Young Jim took the bonds and railroad stocks and the mortgages and played with them as a small boy does with tin soldiers, mauling and destroying the lot as so many outgrown playthings. So that when the new steel cargo-freighter *Lotus* steamed out between the Capes bound from Norfolk to Buenos Aires with coal, he was berthed in her forecastle and down in her log as an able seaman, instead of in the captain's cabin, where certain master's licenses, now forfeited, might have placed him had he not been true to his trait.

By diligent attention to detail, and with rather more outlets for his father's money than others of his name, Jim Falcon reached forty some years before his time. In fact, he had just turned thirty-four in actual years when the *Lotus* made up her first day's run.

The crew of the *Lotus* marked the high tide of need and the low tide of material in American shipping. A coarse, grumbling, ill-dispositioned lot with a good sprinkling of green hands, demanding much and giving little. And with them Jim Falcon belonged and mixed as easily as a hand fits into a well-worn pocket.

"A bunch of tough birds, captain," reported "Kinky" Braune, the first mate. "I'd like to have a free hand with them, if we're to get anywhere toward discipline."

"Go as far as you like," said Captain Melvin McRae. "I can see what you'll have to contend with."

Captain McRae thought himself fortunate in having the thick-chested, bull-necked mate, for only iron could impress the hard men of his crew, and Kinky Braune was that kind.

Braune's system was extremely simple and effective. He had good judgment in the picking of leaders among men and once found proceeded to break them as an example to their following. The plan had in it some courage and daring, and Braune had never had it fail.

Like most of the others, Jim Falcon had come aboard with a skeleton kit, that being the clothes he stood in, depending on the ship's slop-chest for whatever outfit he found necessary, and Kinky Braune took the serving out of these clothes as the opportunity to instil his first lesson.

But Falcon also had a nice sense of values, and on this voyage he had determined so to efface himself that the burden of chieftainship would not fall upon him. Falcon was worn and jaded, with deep lines in his tanned face. Too large a percentage of his food and drink for the past months had been raw spirits. There had been the heading of an arms-smuggling expedition which had left him strife-weary and near hunger. He had no desire to run foul of Kinky Braune.

This trip, he told himself, was to rest up, work the alcohol out of his system and put a reserve of flesh on his big-boned, sinewy frame. Consequently, being a real leader, he had known how to dodge leadership and had even ignored the challenge of "Link" Collins when that big fireman had elbowed his way into first place in the washroom and chose for himself the most desirable bunk.

So also Kinky Braune made a mistake when he set out, according to his lights, to subdue the controlling spirit among the men. On purpose he handed the fireman a suit of overalls several sizes too small.

"Give me a man's size; will you?" said Collins with surly insolence, breaking back into the line and throwing the garment before the mate.

"Get back in line and wait your turn."

Braune's close-set eyes measured the other with almost spoken challenge.

"I'll take my turn now," said Collins hotly. "Some of you brass-bound mates do a lot of hiding behind your uniforms."

Braune laid aside his coat and stepped from behind the chest of clothing. He was well content with the way things were going.

"You want your turn now, do you?" he said. "There's the uniform and here's the turn, if you're man enough to come and get it."

Collins rushed and was stopped suddenly by a solid fist to his jaw. The fight was soon over. After the second knock-down the fireman did not get up. Braune ran to him and sent a heavy foot crashing into his ribs.

"I wouldn't do that," said Jim Falcon. "The man is licked, sir, and has quit fighting."

He stood over the prostrate Collins, facing the mate.

"Another of you wants a little lesson," answered Braune angrily, but the blow that went with the words missed its mark, as Jim Falcon dodged back across the deck, covering up with the skill of a practised boxer.

Braune leaped over Collins and followed. When the time came Falcon struck back, a clean, sure blow, as if his body had uncoiled like a steel spring; but Jim Falcon knew at the instant of its giving, when Kinky Braune only shook his bullet head and came on, that back along the broad road of dissipation he had lost the power to put a hard man out with a single punch, and that the steel in him was tired and needed rewinding and retempering. He thought of this with a little dismay, for never before, with every condition right and his aim perfect, had he failed to score a knock-out.

The slip gave Braune his opportunity as well, for with the attempt he found an opening and stretched Jim Falcon senseless along the deck.

"If any more of you want a turn, you can say the word now," said Braune. "Otherwise, we'll go on back to serving out the clothes."

CAPTAIN Melvin McRae had seen the fight from the bridge. He made no move to interfere. With Kinky Braune in direct control of the men it was the captain's theory that the man should use his own method. He did not exactly approve of the method, and he meant to caution Braune about kicking, but to Jim Falcon, who had looked to the bridge before he interfered, the captain had appeared entirely indifferent.

Braune put on his coat, ordered a bucket of water thrown over the two men to bring them to and continued the day's work. After a little while Jim Falcon got up, walked into the washroom and looked at the bump on his jaw in the small and as yet uncracked mirror. Link Collins joined him as he bathed his face.

"The boys slipped me the news of what happened," he said, "and I want to thank you, bo, for saving my ribs. Some of us'll get this bully yet. The way you handle yourself, with twenty pounds more, I believe you could do it."

"Maybe," said Jim Falcon, "but I haven't got the kick I used to have. I don't blame him. It's that white-livered, psalm-singing hypocrite up on the bridge that lets him do it. This mate is living up to his training, and the captain is not."

"Ever shipmates with him before?" asked Collins.

"No," said Jim Falcon, "but I know him," and then buried his face in the water, refusing to talk further.

Jim Falcon had deliberately chosen the *Lotus* and Captain Melvin McRae, when another ship and another captain would have been just as easy to secure. McRae's success laid alongside his own failure had struck his fancy and aroused his contempt, and the *Lotus* was to make a trip that appealed to him.

He wondered for one thing if McRae would know him, for the two had not met face to face since Jim Falcon had been expelled from college for the last time, while McRae, growing to manhood with the stigma of a model boy tagged to him, had graduated at the head of his class. He had been all the things that Jim Falcon was not and Falcon wanted to see now if the man and the boy were alike, with that curious fascination which one pathway sometimes has for another.

Jim Falcon was unconscious of this, but there was something about him which once seen was not forgotten, and Melvin McRae had known him at first sight and was sure of him as he fought Kinky Braune. A quartermaster interrupted Jim Falcon's toilet to summon him to the bridge.

"Going to get a bawling-out, maybe for being rude to the mate," said Collins. "It'll be my turn next."

But the captain made no mention of what he had seen on the deck.

"Are you Jim Falcon of Rock Head?" he asked.

"Yes," said Jim Falcon.

"We went to school together."

"Yes," said Jim Falcon.

There was an insolent indifference about his tone, a finality which silenced any offer of friendship from the captain. After that there was little to be said.

"That will be all," said the captain, and Jim Falcon went out.

"Stuck up as ever," Falcon muttered to himself, "and as double-faced. He ought to know that I know he's no friend of mine."

JIM FALCON began to put on flesh almost from the first day out. Not that it showed upon him, for he grew no larger in girth. But with wholesome food, regular hours, and nothing stronger to drink than a limited amount of coffee, his gauntness began to round out, his brittle nerves to relax, and the minute cells of his blood to find other duties than the carrying-away of alcoholic waste.

Jim Falcon's recovery was not altogether physical. He loved a good ship, and ships had called to him long ago from Rock Head and sent him questing into deep water. Lately his voyages had been short and too long a time had been spent between them at water-front grog-shop and hotel, the outer rind of the big clean sea, where the wrecks of ships cluttered rotting wharves and the wrecks of men cumbered dirty streets.

He liked the swaggering courage with which the *Lotus* shouldered her blunt bows into giant seas, the steady beat of her engines and the sensitive way she had of answering a single spoke of the wheel, biting on into smooth seas and angry seas as if there was no mystery of the deep water which she did not dare. He liked the run of the searching waves across the deck, the taste of spray on his lips and the whistle of the trade-winds through the scant rigging; and while these things grew in him, hate and intolerance toward his captain grew as well.

Melvin McRae gave Kinky Braune a free hand with the crew and to every outward appearance the plan was working. With Link Collins subdued and Jim Falcon steadily avoiding another clash, the mate bent the crew to his will, did with them about as he wished, until they were fear-ridden, sullen, obedient only because his heavy hand waited to give punishment at the least demur, but cursing him and the captain and the ship behind his back.

Melvin McRae seemed well satisfied. He dominated the brawny mate. Even Jim Falcon could not accuse him of dodging the issue there, but he knew as well as Jim

Falcon that this was not the right way to run a ship. He would not have done it on his first command, or even on his second, but experience had calloused the edge of his conscience, and since Kinky Braune was part of the material given him, he compromised, using the mate where he fitted.

This sidestepping of responsibility was what angered Jim Falcon. It was selfish shirking, for which the crew paid.

"This here mate's about running the ship," complained Link Collins. "What's the matter the captain don't make him let up a little on these green hands? Not a day passes but he belts one of them for nothing whatever but pure cussedness. Is the captain afraid of him, you reckon?"

"No, he's not," said Falcon. "That's the —— of it. All he'd have to do would be to tell this mate to lay off. He's not afraid; he's mean, that's all, and he's letting this fellow do the dirty work because it's easier for him."

"Why don't you tangle with that mate some time?" suggested Collins. "I believe you could handle him now."

Falcon looked at the fireman coldly.

"Why should I?" he said. "He's quit kicking the men when they're down, and I keep out of his way. But I'll tell you this, Collins. If this ship ever gets in a jam where she needs loyalty to save her, Braune and that boss of his in the cabin will find themselves adrift and helpless. There's a time when every man finds that out."

"Well, go on, mate," said Collins, "and spill it. You're not given much to talking."

But Jim Falcon shook his head. That which concerned ships and chances he had won and lost was to be forgotten on this voyage. It was part of the cure he had mapped out for himself.

The ship took on a cargo of grain at Buenos Aires and started on the homeward trip. During the discharge of her coal and the reloading, Jim Falcon had many opportunities for a spree, but the superior aloofness he had assumed toward Melvin McRae kept him aboard. Carousal meant loss of place, and he had laid his own manhood beside the captain's and put himself above. He lost his taste for drink in playing the larger game and to Collins's often repeated invitation to come up and see the sights gave the same answer until the fireman knew that it was no use.

"You looked a good deal like you wasn't too good to take a drink when you came aboard," accused Collins.

"I'm not yet, for that matter," said Falcon. "But I don't want the stuff this time. I'm burnt out on it, and I've been in this place before."

Collins let him alone. There were others aboard the ship who needed no second invitation, and if a man wanted to save his money, that was his business.

Rounding the shoulder of Brazil, the *Lotus* went up the river to Para and took on raw rubber almost to the amount of coal she had burned on the trip up, and Captain Melvin McRae took special pains in the checking and stowing of this most valuable of all South American products.

Skirting the outer fringe of the long West Indies curve of islands, the ship steamed on uneventfully to within a few days of her home port. The engines had had a good try-out on the long trip, and the engine-room force had nursed her and watched her as carefully as the deck officers had heeded her behavior as a sea boat.

"She's a good dry ship," was Captain McRae's summary.

"And she's got a good set of engines in her," reported the chief engineer.

On deck the first hard storm makes or mars a ship's reputation, and below the first round trip counts.

"We haven't crowded her any, captain. That's what's done it," said the chief. "Some companies want you to rack a ship to pieces the first trip to make a record."

Reporting by wireless as she headed into the coast, the captain felt at liberty to ask about the rubber-market and to advise that the ship would not be damaged by making several knots extra speed. The soaring price of rubber and the bearish tendency of the market made the owners anxious to get the ship in at the first hour possible. Melvin McRae himself had most of the money he had saved in the venture. Word went down to the engine-room to give the *Lotus* all the turns she could make.

LINK COLLINS came up to supper, sweat-drenched and blackened. "What's got into the old man?" he wanted to know. "You'd think we were being chased by a tin fish, like in the old days, the way they're crowding her along.

It oughtn't be done with a new ship, I'm telling you."

Jim Falcon listened with only half his senses alert, for he knew enough about this location and the direction of the wind and the way the barometer was acting to know that the *Lotus* would have to be speedy indeed if she outran the storm which it seemed to him was overdue.

Falcon went to the wheel at eight. It was raining and blowing steadily, not with the gusts of a squall but with increasing steady pressure. Captain McRae was on the bridge in heavy overcoat and slicker; and the remains of an old rain-coat, passed on from man to man in the night watches, flopped about Jim Falcon's knees. Captain McRae asked the officer of the watch about the barometer and the number of turns the ship was making and what she logged in the last watch.

"We ought to get up to Five Fathom Bank by morning," he said. "There's a little current with us, despite the wind.

Then he came over and looked into the compass for several minutes, while Jim Falcon, with half a turn right wheel to counteract the drive of the wind on the bow, steered the ship skilfully, with a spoke or two right or left as a heavier wave than usual struck.

Usually Captain McRae kept away from Jim Falcon. But tonight with weightier things at stake he forgot personalities. The ship seemed to run into heavier seas with every mile, as if the gale had been blowing ahead of them for some time; and spitefully, as if protesting, the *Lotus* began to scoop up a sea over her high bows now and then as her engines drove her into them.

Jim Falcon began to wonder after a time why the captain did not whistle below to ease up a few turns, for when the *Lotus* plunged downward and lifted her stern high, she quivered from the racing screw and labored and shook herself like a man staggering from a blow. No one on the bridge or on the ship thought of danger. The *Lotus* had gone through fully as bad before, and as long as her engines kept her out of the trough of the sea she might rack and stagger and grumble, but would remain tight, stanch and strong and, in the words of every charter form, fit to continue her voyage.

At ten o'clock a brief whistle from below brought the captain to the speaking-tube. The chief engineer was speaking.

"I'm stopping the engines, captain," he reported. "Get things secured about the decks."

"What's the trouble?" asked McRae anxiously. "How long will it be? This is a bad sea to get broadside to."

"Can't help it," said the chief, "if she turns turtle. It's the circulating-pump to the condenser. It will take half an hour to get the fire-pump and overboard discharge hooked up to take its place."

The engines were slowing as he finished speaking; and, losing way quickly, the *Lotus* began to fall off before the wind and to roll helplessly. A hidden flaw in the bronze shaft of the circulating-pump had developed into an out-and-out break and had chosen a bad time to make itself apparent.

Jim Falcon kept the ship up with the wheel as long as he could and then, putting the helm amidships, stepped away. The *Lotus* was the plaything of the giant seas. Fifteen, twenty, thirty degrees she rolled. The crash of breaking dishes and sliding furniture came from the officers' dining-room under the bridge; about the deck gear slatted and rolled, and the tops of breaking seas fell and washed among the tangle.

"Call the mate," ordered Melvin McRae, turning to the officer of the watch. "Tell him to turn to with all hands and get the sea-anchor overboard. We may be here longer than half an hour, and if she rolls much more we will have a shifted cargo on hand."

"You," he turned to Jim Falcon, "get below and help break out the sea-anchor."

Jim Falcon hurried. It hurt him to see the *Lotus* adrift and helpless when only minutes before she had fought back with valiant thrust the solid, battering might of the sea. As he ran forward in short dashes between breaking seas, Jim Falcon saw that the *Lotus* was still on an even keel. If the canvas sea-anchor could be got over in time and its drag would hold her bows on to the sea, she would be safe enough until repairs could be made.

He made a note in his mind that if he were ever again the master of a ship he would have this precaution more accessible than where the *Lotus* kept hers—deep in a forward storeroom under a tangle of coal-bags. Sheltered by the foremast and hanging on with both hands to a wire topping-lift,

Falcon waited for a monstrous sea to pass.

The *Lotus* went far over. Falcon heard a cry from the bridge as he held on. The deck slanted until his feet slid out and only his grip on the wire held him. At the downward end of her roll, the *Lotus* hesitated as if she were not quite sure of herself. Another sea struck her, held her, and Falcon knew the game was up.

Then the ship came slowly back, but only part way, for the bulk grain had shifted, the center of gravity was changed and she no longer lay in the water upright.

Falcon scrambled up the ladder to the forecastle, where the anchor windlass was and the chains led out through the pipes. A sledge was held by cleats on the inboard rail. He snatched it up, found the shackle in the port chain and knocked out the pin. The patent anchor drawn to the mouth of the hawse-pipe with its few fathoms of chain made hardly any splash as it went overboard. Then Falcon backed the windlass and paid out chain until the weight of it overboard would let it run free, released the windlass and let it go by the run almost to the bitter end.

This he hoped would act as an emergency sea-anchor, for unless the *Lotus* could be brought head to sea other waves would shift the grain farther and farther until, completely on her side, she would fill and sink.

LEAVING the officer of the watch to finish getting out the canvas sea-anchor, Kinky Braune came running up the ladder to the small deck to see who was running the winch and had surged the chain. Falcon had just knocked the pin out of the shackle on the starboard anchor.

"What're you doing up here?" bellowed Braune. "Who told you to let go that chain?"

"The chains without the anchor will act as a drag," he shouted back above the wind, thinking that Braune might not know of this resort in an emergency.

"About as good as throwing over a fish-line," said the mate. "Get on below and help with that canvas."

"I'll finish what I've started," said Falcon.

"You'll do as I tell you," said the mate, advancing. "This is as good time as any to settle you. I'll heave you overboard."

Falcon dodged nimbly and with a lurch of the ship the mate lost his footing and stumbled over the slack chain. Falcon ran around the other side of the windlass, pulled the lever wide and started the chain to paying out. As Braune got up for another rush, he broke off the control with the sledge so that the machine could not be stopped without going on to the deck and turning off the steam.

He laughed almost joyfully as he flung the sledge overboard and met Kinky Braune. Now indeed was as good a time as any to settle many differences, and Jim Falcon with months of clean living behind him felt sure that the blows he could give would do more than make Kinky Braune shake his head.

Braune was confident. He had laid out Falcon with one punch before, and a second subsiding was only part of the night's work, a pleasant diversion and an outlet to his temper. The backing winch was paying out chain at full speed and, thanks to it and to the other chain already out, the *Lotus* was heading up slightly so that the waves struck broad on her bow instead of amidships. Her list had grown no worse during the last half-dozen rolls.

Braune knew this, and that the quick work at the anchor-chains was to be thanked, but here was a man defying his authority, one whose seamanship challenged his own and whose bearing, even after their brief fight, had never remotely approached the servility he demanded.

The deck had the slope of a steep roof and the iron plates were wet and slippery. There was small chance for a lighter man to get away, to depend on skill against superior strength, but with his worn, sodden shoes gripping the deck as well as Braune's rubber boots, Jim Falcon locked with the mate.

Close-in contests appealed to Braune. Falcon had parried his first blow but had had no time to strike back. The two swayed a moment. Braune suddenly felt Falcon's body give and, deceived by its comparative slightness, followed rashly, only to have it grow instantly into a corded bundle of wire rope, which flicked off his surprized fingers and twisted away.

Standing with feet braced against the bitts, Falcon struck twice, first to the body to find his man and draw his guard, and then to the jaw with the savage force of all his hoarded strength and his hate of the other's

brutal stupidity. Braune swayed to the rail and hung inertly against the iron rods.

"Enough?" questioned Falcon.

Braune made no move and no answer. In the dark Falcon's blow had gone wide a finger's breadth. The mate was whipped, but still conscious. Unseen, he picked up an iron shackle left lying loose after it had been used to hook up a boom tackle. As Falcon disappeared down the ladder, he rose on his knees and threw it viciously. He heard it strike and the thump of Falcon's body on the deck. Then he went down himself, turned off the steam and stopped the windlass.

"Good work, Braune," said the captain at his elbow. "Getting the chains over has brought her up. See if you can hurry the men along any on the other job."

The mate leaped in cursing and men began to slink away, but enough stood by and the work was so far along that very shortly the sea-anchor was helping to bring the *Lotus* around into the wind and sea.

JIM FALCON'S old slouch hat and thick, curly hair had saved his head to some extent. He lay in the scupper until a plunge of the ship brought a wave-top washing down on him. It soaked him though and brought him speedily to consciousness.

The fore part of the ship seemed deserted, the only sounds being the crash of seas against the bows, the changing key of the wind's tone as the *Lotus* pitched and the squeak of the new hawser against the bitts which held the canvas sea-anchor.

Jim Falcon felt of the long bump along his scalp and got up. The salt water made the bruised flesh sting. Then he crept aft holding to the rail, often to his waist in water.

"They will be trying to trim her," he said to himself. "I was a fool not to make sure of Braune before I started away."

In the waist of the ship, somewhat sheltered by the deck-house, the men were assembled around No. 3 hatch. A cargo-light gleamed into their wet faces. Jim Falcon stopped outside its circle, unnoticed by the group. Captain Melvin McRae was there, and the other officers and Braune. A few hatch-boards were off and the mate was raving at the men.

"Get in there, you scum," he shouted. "Trim that cargo before she sinks under you and drowns the lot of you rats!"

He lunged into the group, punishing, driving with all his old lash of fists and kick of heavy boots. The men made small resistance, melted away before him, reformed in another place, but none of them started below.

"That will do, Braune," spoke Captain McRae. "Let me speak to them."

Jim Falcon smiled contemptuously as he listened.

"Too late," he muttered to himself, looking out at what was happening as if it were a play in which he had no concern.

"This is little short of mutiny," spoke the captain sharply. "The safety of the ship depends on getting below and shoveling the shifted grain back to where it belongs. Any sailor worthy of the name would do it."

"We'd get in there and be battened down," said a voice. "Then if she goes over, what chance would there be?"

"Lemme get that fellow, captain," whispered Braune, but Captain McRae restrained him, while he talked on, argued, urged, cajoled.

"Come on, men," he said finally. "I'll go in with you. Take a shovel myself."

"Beg! You puppy!" sneered Jim Falcon, his undertone purposely inaudible to the knot of men. "But it'll do you no good with this bunch whose manhood you've let Braune stamp out."

"To —— with that hot air," came the same voice, a little man full in the glare of light, and Kinky Braune broke bounds.

Curiously the little man made small attempt to get away. Braune caught his shoulder, whirled him about, struck him to the deck, started to kick his ribs with his heavy boots. The little man fumbled at his ragged clothing and screamed as the first kick crashed into his thin side.

McRae, just behind Braune, sought to get in between him and his victim.

"No more of that!" he cried, but the mate was beside himself.

He shook off the captain's restraining hands and leaped at the contorted, prostrate figure to finish what he had begun. His foot sent the little man's gun whirling overboard. There had been one shot, a streak of fire, and a snarl of desperate agony from the writhing form on the hatch. McRae staggered, fell backward on the deck and lay still. Aimed at the mate, the bullet had found the captain.

Braune gloated an instant.

"You murdering sneak," he said. "This leaves me skipper. I'll teach you," and he stepped forward eagerly.

The little man tried to get up, to roll away, but his crushed ribs made the effort pitiful. He made little panting sounds of fear like a wounded animal. Braune was upon him; he bent over, lifted him by the throat to shake him, to sate his rage on his battered body.

"Let go, Braune," said Jim Falcon behind him. "Mine is first right."

A little murmur came from the men, a sort of subdued, wondering hope. Braune let the little man go and turned instantly. On the small deck above luck had been against him. Here was challenge, a chance to settle once and for all the other's quiet insolence, and to do it before the riffraff crew. He would show them the real dominance of a real captain.

Across the slanting hatch, in and out of the glare of the cargo-light, over the open space where the hatch-boards had been removed, the two men fought: Braune, with the strength and fury of a mad bull; Jim Falcon with the swooping dash of an eagle, punishing, marking, saving himself. Braune's lips bled, his eyes were punched shut, his nose twisted and broken. Falcon lashed him, made him suffer, drained away his brute courage, would not give the merciful knock-out which he held always with exultant pride in his rebuilt vitality.

Braune began staggering, tried ignominiously to get away, panted for mercy finally through puffed lips, but Falcon would not give it to him, kept on until he grew sick with the feel of blood-spattered flesh against his bony fists.

"Get a shovel," he ordered after Braune had staggered to his feet the fourth time, shamelessly pleading, "and lead the way into the hold."

The second mate interposed.

"I'm not saying but what Mr. Braune got what was coming, Falcon. He struck at you first, I believe. But I'll give the orders, being the next in line."

Jim Falcon stepped back with amused contempt.

"Go to it, Mr. Mate," he said. "I wish you luck."

Not a man moved when the mate ordered the men to go to the task of trimming the cargo.

"What does Jim say about it?" said Collins' voice.

"Mr. Braune will lead the way," said the mate, temporizing.

"Like —— I will," said Kinky Braune. "Who're you giving orders to, anyhow?"

THE steward and one of the messmen had been working over the captain. They had carried him into his cabin and revived him with a swallow of brandy, bound the wound, which was well down through the shoulder, just missing the right lung. There was a sizable lump on his head where he had struck the steel deck. Supported by the two men, he insisted on getting back to the hatch. Captain McRae had too much at stake to let a mere bullet-hole keep him from using every effort to bring the ship in.

They told him of the fight between Braune and Falcon, and he arrived in time to hear the second mate's fiasco. Melvin McRae knew the family history of the Falcons. He made a decision.

"Mr. White," he interrupted, speaking to the second mate, now completely at a loss as to the course to pursue, "I'm appointing James Falcon as first mate. Mr. Braune is relieved from all duty as an officer. You will take orders from Mr. Falcon."

JIM FALCON brought the *Lotus* in. He thought at first that the love of a good ship made him do it, but he knew later that he had come to the turn, as his fathers before him. What suffering and what endless hours of suspense followed while the driven crew toiled at the shifted grain is the endless story of the sea and the men who go down to it as conquerors.

Kinky Braune shoveled as two men and paused only to stoke in quantities of hot food. The others tried to match their strength with his. Captain McRae lay half-delirious in his cabin. The two mates were on the bridge, watch and watch, and Jim Falcon was everywhere, the vigor and the power of him radiating into every man and meeting every situation with an answer that won.

The sea did not let up. Instead it grew more vengefully wicked with every mile. It sent down fog, and blinding snow and foamcrested ranks of charging demons. But, the pump working again, the *Lotus* slipped

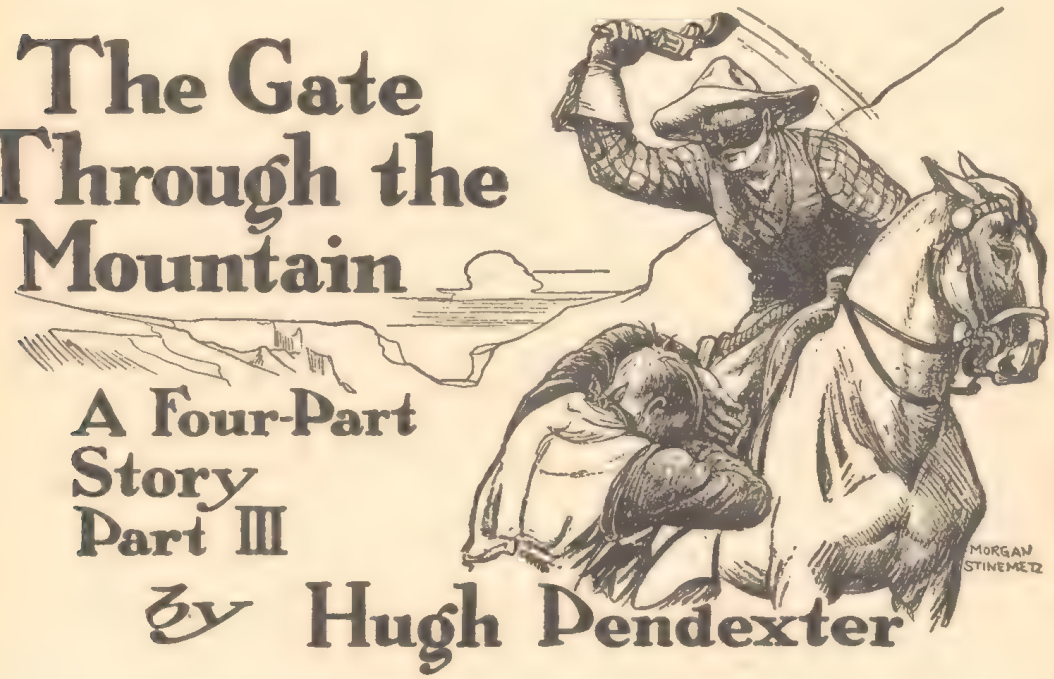
her cables, cut away the sea-anchor and moved on stolidly, knot after knot, always a little evener as to keel and a little safer, until at last she threw out her spare bower to a bight of steel towing-hawser and lay safe in harbor, letting the storm rave on to its impotent end.

All of this took seamanship and leadership and hard work. It took a crew which was loyal, and the skill of a master of men, and all of these things Jim Falcon brought about. He took the ship out next trip and Melvin McRae recommended that he be given a better one next time.

McRae's interest in the rubber brought him an interest in the company. When Jim Falcon was forty-five he also was a director and fast gaining toward the management and part ownership of a fleet of ships.

Young Jim Falcon was four years old and looked like his father, who wondered often where the strain would lead and what the end would be.

The Gate Through the Mountain



A Four-Part Story Part III

By Hugh Pendexter

Author of "When Kentucky Starved," "Gentlemen of the North," etc.

The first part of this story briefly retold in story form

TWICE during that Summer day of 1867, Richens Lacy Wooton, commonly known as "Uncle Dick" Wooton, had opened his toll-gate to admit the passing of a stage-coach, and each time the passengers had excitedly informed the gate-keeper that they had been held up. Rumors were current that the road-agents had combined under the leadership of a mysterious bandit known as "Gentleman Ralph."

Among the agents identified by the driver of the first coach were the notorious "Boy Charlie" and "Chuckle-Luck." The passengers, despite the denials of "Turkey Bill," the driver, insisted also that a woman had been present at the hold-up. The driver of the other coach had been badly wounded, and Joe Peace, an unsuccessful prospector who had been asleep in the coach, had brought the second stage and wounded driver to Uncle Dick's house.

Uncle Dick Wooton, admitted to be second only to "Kit" Carson as a mountain man, had built a toll-road through Raton Pass when the immigration of settlers, gold-seekers and adventurers demanded a more direct route for wagons to southeast Colorado and northeast New Mexico than was afforded by the old Santa Fé Trail. From his lofty home at the toll-gate he overlooked the valley of the Purgatory River, and to the north he could see the white dome of Pike's Peak.

Shortly after the coaches had departed, two men afoot brought in a bruised, unconscious girl, and disappeared.

Slowly the girl's bruises mended, but she remained delirious, exclaiming from time to time:

"Skeletons! Dead men's bones! The river! The river!"

Further than this Uncle Dick and Joe Peace could not understand her.

Recovering from the shock, her memory partly

returned, though she was yet unable to identify herself or tell whence she had come.

" 'Alameda'—that's all I remember—and 'convent,' " she said.

Uncle Dick decided to name her "Mary June." She was, however, able to draw a sketch of a place which seemed to stand foremost in her memory. This sketch showed a narrow trail along the right bank of a river, and on the edge of the trail stood a stunted pine, twisted and distorted by the elements, behind which were several human skeletons.

Though Uncle Dick did not recognize the place, he believed it to be along the Purgatory River and decided to set out in quest of it. First, however, he told Joe Peace, who had fallen in love with Mary June, that he must keep his affection to himself until the girl had recovered her past. Also he set several friendly Arapaho Indians to guard the girl. These had heard of the woman who traveled with the road-agents, but refused to talk of her, believing her a medicine-woman.

Deciding first to visit Baptiste, a mixed-blood trader who was usually well informed concerning what was happening in that part of the country, Uncle Dick set out early the next morning. As he paused beside a small lake, a bullet whizzed by his head and plumped into the water before him.

From the shelter of the woods he saw ten horsemen round the turn behind him. He took a shot at the leader. The troop was thrown into confusion and Uncle Dick galloped off.

At Baptiste's trading-post he found that breed engaged in a duel with a newly established trader across the river, and, covering both with his revolvers, Uncle Dick halted the fight.

Here he found that the night before a wounded man had staggered to the trader's and there had died. The two were now quarreling over the contents of a bag suspended from the dead man's neck.

Determined to settle the argument, Uncle Dick went to the body and took the bag. The body he identified as that of Boy Charlie, but Baptiste refused to admit that he had known the road-agent. When the other two were not looking, Uncle Dick extracted from the bag a slip of paper on which was drawn the same sketch as that by Mary June, except that the skeletons were lacking and in their place was a small cross and beneath it the figures 56. Also he found in the bag a little gold-filled cross which, with the permission of the traders, he kept.

He could get no information from them, however, concerning the mysterious white woman. Keene, Baptiste's rival, he believed really knew nothing, and Keene, despairing of success as a trader, decided to join Joe Peace at the toll-house and try prospecting.

Continuing on his way, Uncle Dick met a band of Kiowas headed by Satanta, the most dreaded of the Kiowa chiefs. Realizing, however, that most Indians were friendly toward him and resolved to see what information he could get, Uncle Dick advanced boldly into the camp.

Satanta was friendly but suspicious, and Uncle Dick received no information concerning the road-agents or the mysterious woman.

That night, concealed near the Indian camp, he saw some twenty Dakotas ride up and hold conference with Satanta. He realized that trouble was coming and decided to drop his own quest in order to go to Colonel Leavenworth for help.

EARLY the next morning Uncle Dick Wooton spread a blanket, thinking to catch a few minutes' sleep.

"Help! Help!"

Cautiously the mountaineer crawled to the place whence the cry had come, and there he found a man lying flat on his back, his flannel shirt caked with blood. At a glance Uncle Dick saw that the man had no chance for life.

Realizing this himself, the dying man revealed to the old mountaineer that he was one of the gang of bandits under Gentleman Ralph. He also disclosed the fact that he was the uncle of Mary June, whose name, he said, was Isobel. She had not known that her uncle was a bandit, so far as he knew, and he had joined the gang so that he could collect enough money to take her East.

Boy Charlie had shot the dying man after the latter had revealed the spot where his niece had discovered the gold nuggets which Uncle Dick had found on Boy Charlie's body at Baptiste's trading-post. This man had fired on Boy Charlie at the time, but did not believe he had hit him. Uncle Dick, however, assured him that Boy Charlie was dead and that his niece was safe at the toll-house. The mountaineer learned that Chuckle-Luck also knew of the discovery of the nuggets but did not know where they had been found. To Uncle Dick the dying man described the spot—between the twisted pine and the hole under the cliff.

Before Uncle Dick could discover Isobel's last name the man died.

Back at the toll-house the mountaineer dispatched a messenger to Colonel Leavenworth to warn him of the threatened Indian uprising. In the house he found Joe Peace and Sam Keene quarreling over the girl, both apparently in love with her. Uncle Dick intervened but could not prevail upon the two to shake hands. He warned them both, however, that he considered the girl his daughter and that they must keep away.

That evening the north-bound coach came tearing down the grade toward the toll-gate. From the driver, "One-Eyed" Cassidy, Uncle Dick learned that the coach had been held up and the driver ordered to deliver a note to Wooton. The note demanded that Uncle Dick send the girl out to the bandits; this note was signed by Gentleman Ralph. Uncle Dick scrawled a reply in which he told the bandit to go to ——. When the coach left, Joe Peace and Sam Keene decided to follow behind in the hope of shooting a few of the outlaws.

That night Uncle Dick was suddenly aroused from his sleep by a sharp cry. Rushing to Isobel's room he found the girl gone and her Indian nurse, "the Quail" with a deep scalp-wound.

Rushing from the house, he met Joe Peace, One-Eyed Cassidy and the passengers, all returning on foot. The coach had been taken by the bandits, apparently for the purpose of carrying off the girl. Sam Keene, who had gone out with Joe Peace, had disappeared just before the hold-up and at the same time Joe Peace's horse had been shot from under him.

THAT night Joe Peace and Uncle Dick set out after the bandits. At some distance down the road they found the empty coach, and here Uncle Dick decided to wait for daylight to continue the search. Joe Peace, however, impatient at the delay, finally set off alone.

The next morning, as Peace did not return, Uncle

Dick made his way through the underbrush and along a secret trail leading from the road. This trail finally led him to the top of the bluff overlooking the road. From there he saw two masked men, whom he judged to be bandits, meet unexpectedly at a turning of the road, fire pointblank at each other and then ride off.

Still continuing the secret trail, Uncle Dick finally came to a spot overlooking a narrow, rocky cañon. Peering over the edge, he saw a score of men sprawled around a rude shack. From the door of the shack a girl appeared but was immediately ordered to go back inside. The girl Uncle Dick recognized as Mary June.

Realizing that all of the troops in the vicinity were busy with threatened Indian uprisings, Uncle Dick resolved to enlist the help of the friendly Arapahoes.

At their camp he received a rather cold welcome and finally discovered that Satanta, the Kiowa chief, was in consultation with Yellow Bear, leader of the Arapahoes. The Kiowa resented Uncle Dick's intrusion but dared not say anything. By skilful diplomacy "Cut-Hand," as the Indians called Uncle Dick, finally succeeded in gaining the promise of immediate aid from both Yellow Bear and Satanta, the latter promising to go to Colonel Leavenworth atfer the girl had been rescued and there to arrange a peace treaty.

It was decided that the party should attack the rendezvous of Gentleman Ralph and his followers that night.

CHAPTER VI

SATANTA PLAYS THE BUGLE

THE last of the Arapaho scouts to return reported that up to sundown the outlaws had shown no disposition to shift their camp. Waiting until night had inked out the hollows between the foothills, Yellow Bear took ten warriors and departed to assault the back door of the cañon. As this detachment had the greatest distance to travel it was left for the chief to give the signal of attack—two rifle shots fired in quick succession. Uncle Dick, guided by the young brave who had declared he knew a way of descending the precipitous cliff, set forth to gain the top of the wall. Satanta and the rest of the Arapahoes rode for the mouth of the ravine, traveling leisurely, as their part of the program was considered to be the easiest of initiating.

A ride of two miles, with the Indian leading the way, brought Uncle Dick to the foot of the towering rocks. The guide was called Crooked Arm. As he was perfect in figure, however, Uncle Dick knew this must be a dream-name—one he had chosen on reaching young manhood and in some way a symbol of his personal tutelary, revealed to him while in a trance.

"You are sure you can follow the secret path in this darkness?" anxiously asked Uncle Dick as they began the ascent.

"I know the way. I will get me a new name—a war-name tonight," fiercely assured Crooked Arm. "When I went into the mountains with my bow and arrows to get my name I passed through this cañon and found the way up over the top. It is easier to go down than up, as, at the bottom, to the height of ten men, it is very smooth and steep and one must use a rope."

Hoping the young brave's ability would square up with his confidence, Uncle Dick kept at the Indian's heels, going almost entirely by the sense of touch and often glad of a helping hand.

When they finally gained the crest of the rock, the mountaineer threw himself on his face to regain his breath, keenly conscious of his lost youth. His companion, seemingly unaffected by the stiff climb, stole to the edge of the wall and crouched low that he might not be discerned against the starlit skyline. His low exclamation of joy infused new life into Uncle Dick's limbs. Crawling forward the mountaineer was delighted to find his gaze resting on a blazing camp-fire almost beneath him. As he looked he caught glimpses of black figures passing back and forth through the zone of light. He knew the opaque patch near the wall was the shack.

"Do we go down here?" he asked of Crooked Arm.

The Indian removed a heavy coil of rawhide from round his waist and crept along the wall a hundred feet. His sibilant signal brought Uncle Dick to his side. Taking the mountaineer's hand, he placed it on a small mound of rocks and proudly informed:

"I put these here when I came up the path that time I went to find my name. I came up without the help of any cord, but the rawhide will help us over the place at the bottom. We must use the rawhide if we bring the medicine-woman up. Does Cut-Hand wait, or will he go down now?"

"Is there a place before we reach bottom where we can stop and wait for Yellow Bear's signal?"

"A little standing-place where I shall begin to use the rawhide."

"Then we'll go that far now," decided Uncle Dick.

With the Indian preceding him the mountaineer worked down the rough stairway composed of weathered knobs of rock and suggesting a gully worn out in ages past by some stream. The winds and rains of each season had kept the way clean of detritus, so there was small danger of their presence being betrayed by dislodged pebbles. Uncle Dick found this part of the work to be less irksome than the ascent of the other side.

As they crawled lower the sound of voices came up to meet them—at first a low murmuring, then audible words. As the voices began to take on individuality, so that one was to be distinguished from another, Crooked Arm came to a halt and seized his companion's hand.

"We can rest here," he whispered. "I will fix the end of the rawhide fast and when the signal is given we can finish very quick. I shall get me a war-name tonight."

Uncle Dick cautiously felt about with his feet and found he was standing on a shelf wide enough to sprawl out on but not extending more than a dozen feet toward the fire. The shack stood between him and the blaze and from its outline he deduced it was larger and much more substantial than he had supposed when first viewing it from the top of the wall. As his gaze grew accustomed to the light and shadows, he saw that some fifty feet remained to be covered before he could stand on the floor of the cañón. What quickly held his interest were the irregular dark shapes along the foot of the wall, extending from a point beneath him to beyond the shack.

He touched Crooked Arm's hand and pointed at them. The Indian explained they were boulders, presumably once a part of the cliff. The lower and upper ends of the cañon were impenetrable to the gaze, the fan of light from the fire intensifying the darkness.

As the two men watched they saw a small band of horsemen ride from the fire, some going up, the others going down the cañon. After a brief period of waiting other horsemen broke through the darkness, coming from both ends of the cañon. The newcomers rode joyously into the light and loudly answered their companions' salutations with demands for food and drink.

"Changing their guards," mumbled Uncle Dick. "Well, if they don't post more men'n that they'll have the Injuns down on 'em in no time."

This possibility worried him. The success of his scheme demanded that the alarmed outlaws should ride off to hold both ends of the cañon, leaving a weak force, or none at all, to guard the shack. If too weak a resistence permitted the Indians to break through there would be no curbing their war-lust and they would triumphantly press forward until they had the enemy hedged in around the shack. Then the outlaws, superbly armed and superb fighters battling for their lives, would doubtless turn the tables and administer an ignominious defeat.

"Wish I'd hammered it into Satanta's and the Bear's heads that they was to hold off till they'd decoyed most of the gang up to 'em," he regretted. Then he continued philosophically: "But it wouldn't 'a' done any good. Once the Injuns see 'em falling back they'll begin to *hi-yi* and show off."

The outlaws lounging around the fire betrayed no appearance of concern. At some time they had brought in a large amount of fuel from the top of the back door, where the evergreen growth commenced, and this they burned lavishly, suggesting to Uncle Dick that the band did not expect to camp in that spot many times. It was also patent that they depended entirely upon the guards stationed at the ends of the cañon to protect them from a surprize attack, that they never dreamed of any danger coming over the cliffs. Their attitude was that of careless ease and complete relaxation as they lay about the fire, many with their belts of weapons thrown aside, eating, drinking and playing cards.

This confidence and the string of boulders along the foot of the cliff inspired Uncle Dick with a new ambition. Although the rescue of the girl was the all-important purpose of the night's venture, he was extremely curious to learn something definite as to the robbers' identity. None of the gang wore masks, and during his watching he had seen no horsemen ride near the boulders. Invariably they rode in the middle of the cañon. His decision was abruptly made. Turning to Crooked Arm he announced:

"CUT-HAND will go down among the rocks and listen to the men talking. Remain here until the signal is fired by Yellow Bear, then, softly as a snake, come to me. You shall count a warrior's coup without making a sound."

The Indian was opposed to this, preferring that the white man stay on the shelf while he did the reconnoitering. Uncle Dick overrode his inclination, knowing full well the hot blood-lusting for a warrior's honors would surely spoil the whole scheme by some premature bit of reckless daring. Armed only with a revolver and knife, the mountaineer seized the rope and began easing himself down. For practically all the way he was able to assist himself with his feet against the cliff. As he came to a halt in the darkness at the foot of the steep rock he realized it would be no easy matter to get Miss Mary up to the shelf.

Putting that trouble aside until he should come to it, he dropped behind a boulder and studied the shack. It showed no lights, nor could he detect any signs of occupancy. Suddenly a fear that the girl had been spirited away by the gang's leader assailed him, and, with the old cunning which had placed him next to Kit Carson in mountain-craft, he swiftly worked along the cliff.

Midway between the line of rawhide and the shack his advance was halted by the coming of two horsemen from down the cañon. Contrary to what he had observed, these two swerved in close to the boulders. Uncle Dick remained motionless. The horse nearest him plunged and reared, and a man laughed boisterously. They were abreast of him and, as the rider of the frightened animal cursed and reined him closer to the rocks, Uncle Dick made ready to shoot, fearing he was about to be discovered. The man who had laughed counseled:

"If ye don't want to bust yer nag's legs ye'd better keep clear of that clutter. Them rocks is thicker'n plums in a pud-din'."

With an oath the other spurred his horse recklessly ahead, his stirrup grazing a rock, and reined in behind the shack. Here he remained for a few moments as if listening for some sound within; then the two rounded the structure and joined the camp-circle.

Uncle Dick resumed his journey and was close to the shack when a light twinkled a dozen feet ahead and he heard a woman's low voice demanding—

"What do you want in here?"

"I want to talk. Put that light out!" replied a coarse voice.

"Your leader promised I shouldn't be molested. Go out at once or I'll call for help."

Uncle Dick fingered his revolver and edged nearer. The light was that of a candle. The girl's voice was Miss Mary's. Even though deeply agitated at the thought of her being in peril from the ruffian's visit, he did not miss a new quality in her voice. He would have expected a pitiable fear to be registered; instead she spoke firmly and with no trace of weakness. A few days before she could not endure the sight of a stage-coach; and now she faced and gave commands to an outlaw. Uncle Dick began to believe the ascent of the cliff would not be so difficult for her after all.

Near the top of the shack was a small opening that served as a window. Uncle Dick rose to his feet to peer through this, but the risk was too great. The only alternative was to crawl across the open space and spy through the crevice. He would have dared this, had not one of the men by the fire wandered toward the end of the shack.

Dropping to cover, Uncle Dick heard the man inside the shack gruffly remonstrate.

"I tell ye I must talk with ye. It's for yer own good."

"I'll call for help in three seconds if you're not gone. If your leader has any authority over you he won't approve of your coming in here," was the spirited reply.

"Keep yer yap closed. I'll go outside an' talk through the winder," growled the man. "I'm tryin' to show ye how ye can git clear of this gang an' go back to yer friends, if ye'll let me. Of course if ye make a row I can't do nothin' to help ye."

That the girl was somewhat favorably impressed by this speech was indicated by the bit of silence that ensued. When she spoke it was to say:

"If you'll go outside I'll listen. You can talk through the window."

"An' ye'll douse that glim so I won't be all lit up?"

"I'll put it out when you come to the window."

The sound of the door softly closing and being bolted was soon followed by the cautious steps of the man rounding the corner

of the shack. From the fire came a medley of curses, laughter and snatches of song, as the gang ate, drank and gambled. Uncle Dick seized his revolver by the barrel and held it as a club. The man was now at the window and standing on a fragment of rock. The light inside vanished. By taking two steps ahead the mountaineer could have felled the outlaw.

"Now I'll hear what you have to say about getting me out of here," came the girl's low voice.

"Ye know somethin' I want to know. Tell me that an' I'll snake ye clear an' put ye back on top of Raton Pass. Will ye trade?"

"What do you want to know?"

"Where did ye pick up them two little gold nuggets?"

The query came in a whisper and it revealed the feverish avarice of the man's soul.

"I've already been asked that by your leader. He promised to set me free if I'd tell him," was the weary answer.

"——!" exploded the outlaw under his breath. "So he's huntin' the trail already. Listen to me! He's crooked. I'm bad, but I play straight when I give my word. He never plans to keep his word. Ye can't trust him. Tell me now an' I'll fetch two hosses an' pretend I'm goin' to relieve the guard. The gang's busy with the cards an' the bottle. At th' mouth of th' cañon I'll give the word an', afore they know it, we'll be outside an' ridin' for Raton Pass. Afore mornin' I'll have ye back home with that old sucker at the toll-gate."

Uncle Dick gritted his teeth at this contemptuous characterization and his fingers itched to swing the clubbed revolver against the fellow's skull. The girl was saying:

"It's no use. Your leader knows I've forgot where or how I found any gold—if I found any. I haven't seen any gold. None was found on me when I went to the station in the pass."

"That forgittin' business sounds fishy," warned the outlaw. "I'm givin' ye a chance. Ye never can go for the gold yerself. If ye tell the boss ye won't ever git a chance to yip to any one else. He'll see to that. Calls himself Gentleman Ralph. He's th' devil. Know who he is?" He paused and laughed deep in his throat. "I should say ye don't. There's few that does but I happen to be one of the few. Think a feller like him is goin' to take a chance on a woman's gittin' loose to blab on him? Now I'm rough; but all I'm after is the gold. I ain't got any eye for a woman. Ralph has."

He waited for the sinister warning to sink in. Uncle Dick could hear the girl catch her breath as she fought back her hysterical fear. Her voice was scarcely audible as she said:

"If I knew where I found the gold—if I ever did find any—I'd tell you, tell any one gladly who would get me out of this horrible place. Don't you understand that I've lost my memory? I don't even know who I am. I was hurt or frightened. I remember nothing of anything that happened before coming to my senses at the toll-house."

Never having heard of amnesia it was difficult for the outlaw to credit this statement.

"See here," he coaxed, "ye're afeared to trust me, but I was one of the two men what took yer to the toll-house. I done it because I couldn't be cruel to a woman. Ye had bumped yer head, that I know. Ye didn't know nothin' when me'n' another feller took ye there. I risked my neck to git ye where that old cuss of a Wooton could fix ye up. Now ye're well ag'in, ye can thank me. An' a well person don't go round without rememberin' things. Tell me an' go scot free; or refuse an' Gentleman Ralph will git ye as well as yer gold."

"It's no use," sighed the girl. "To save my life I couldn't tell you what I don't know."

"Ye can't never make Gentleman Ralph believe that," growled the outlaw who, according to his statement that he had helped to carry the girl to the station, must be Chuckle-Luck.

"I think he does believe it," she slowly answered.

"Then he'll keep ye cooped up till ye git yer brains back," snarled the outlaw. "In a day or so ye'll be keen to git clear of us, but there won't be any more chances like to-night. He ain't here now, and the trick can't be worked once he rides in."

"I can't tell what I don't know," she repeated dully.

Uncle Dick heard the outlaw grind his teeth in impotent rage. Suddenly he chuckled as one inspired, and he hissed—

"Couldn't ye remember an' tell me if it was to save the life of old Wooton?"

With a little cry the girl gasped—

"That would be too evil, even for men like you!"

"To save his life?" fiercely insisted the outlaw.

"God save me! I'd—I'd try," she moaned.

"His life for the gold?" he harshly persisted. "Yes or no!"

"Yes."

"I reckon I've brought back yer mem'ry to ye," exulted the outlaw. "Now ye can spit it out."

"When you've taken me to Mr. Wooton I'll tell you—not before," she slowly answered.

Chuckle-Luck demanded the secret then and there, but she remained obdurate.

"I don't trust you an inch," she insisted. "Get me out of here and I'll tell."

Realizing he was wasting his time, he sullenly promised.

"All right. I'm game. I'll go an' fetch two hosses. May take some minutes to fool the gang, but I'm comin', never worry."

Uncle Dick writhed as he heard the outlaw cautiously withdrawing. Only by a mighty effort did he manage to hold himself back.

"Old Wooton, is it?" he thought. "Huh! I'll cut out that dog's heart for what he said to her and about me. Lord! But didn't she lie like a good one when she thought I was in danger!"

BUT now a new act in the little drama was unfolding. Chuckle-Luck, on returning to the light of the camp-fire, began to appreciate the magnitude of the task before him. The men were at ease, but for him to secure two horses and get the girl out of the shack without being seen seemed impossible. Consequently he was in a vile humor when one of his mates called out:

"Here's Chuckle-Luck now. Come an' try yer luck, Chuckle. I can clean ye out."

"Go to ——!" growled Chuckle-Luck, making to pass the party of gamesters.

The one who had invited him to sit in reached out and grabbed his leg, insisting—

"Mebbe I shall but I'm goin' to trim ye first."

With a bellow of rage Chuckle-Luck drew back his foot and kicked the man in the side. The fellow instantly sprang to his feet, his face gray with anger at the unexpected assault.

"Kick me, will ye, ye low-down ——!" he roared, jumping forward with a long knife glittering in his hand.

Chuckle-Luck seemed to welcome this vent to his sullen rage and at once prepared to fight by yanking a knife from his belt of revolvers.

With a whoop of delight the gang jumped to their feet, one crying out:

"Make it a good one! Over the handkerchief!"

"That's th' talk! Over the hanker!"

There was a cold-bloodedness about the proposal that caused the man who had been kicked to draw back a trifle. His hesitancy was almost imperceptible, but Chuckle-Luck detected it and gloated:

"Over the hanker it is. Stand to yer medicine, yer yaller dog. I'm goin' to cut yer throat!"

"I'll have somethin' to say about that, —— yer eyes!" yelled the other, now committed to the gruesome contest beyond any possibility of retreating.

Exuberant at the prospects of the bloody sport the men tied two handkerchiefs together and made them fast to two picket-pins. The latter were driven into the rocky soil. On each side parallel with and a scant three feet back of the handkerchiefs, a line was drawn on the ground. Then one of the men announced:

"Ye both know the rules. Keep between the line an' the hanker. Firelight seems right for both sides. Take yer places."

Chuckle-Luck rolled up his right sleeve in a business-like manner and, grasping his bowie-knife, advanced till the handkerchief brushed against him.

"Now, ye dog, let's see ye make me budge from this spot. Hop over that! ine! Hump yerself! I'm waitin' to fill yer boots with blood. Come up here or I'll take after ye an' slice ye into little bits of pieces."

This unexpected situation brought Uncle Dick to his feet, a great hope swelling his heart. So preoccupied were the outlaws that he believed he could get the girl out of the shack, to the rope and up the cliff before the gang could interfere. He advanced boldly to the back of the shack and was about to whisper her name through the window when she spoiled his plan by screaming at the top of her voice.

If her outcry destroyed her chances of escape it saved Chuckle-Luck's adversary from a terrible death, for it stayed Chuckle-Luck's first thrust, when he had his opponent's life at the point of his knife, and, in the slight pause, a lone rider galloped furiously out of the darkness.

Uncle Dick drove back behind the boulder. The newcomer wore a long black cloak and a black mask. He spurred his horse between the dazed duelists, striking a gloved hand into the face of each, and instantly swung his animal about on its hind legs. As he faced the startled group it was with a revolver in each hand. He fired, and Chuckle-Luck yelped and dropped his shattered knife, his arm tingling. A second shot and the other duelist cried out as his blade was violently torn from his hand.

For a few moments the rider leaned forward, his two guns held high, his masked face slowly turning to sweep the alarmed faces raised to meet his gaze. When he spoke it was in a high-pitched voice, almost falsetto in its shrillness, his words coming with a whining intonation.

"You miserable curs!" he began. "You dare forget my orders and fight among yourselves! You dare frighten that young lady by brawling within her hearing! Chuckle-Luck, come here! Come nearer!"

Chuckle-Luck, his arm benumbed by the shock of the heavy bullet against his broad blade, gaped in fear at his master but slowly advanced, sidling along as though striving to hold himself back, yet impelled to go forward. The gang looked on in tense expectation, horrified and yet fascinated, and none thinking to lift a hand against the cloaked figure.

At last Chuckle-Luck stood at the stirrup, breathing rapidly as if exhausted by much running, his face twitching as he gazed into the eyes glowing through the slits in the mask. Without shifting his gaze the bandit leader tossed a revolver into the air and caught it by the barrel. Then, bending to one side to get room for the blow, he smashed the heavy butt between the shrinking eyes.

Chuckle-Luck, so ready to fight to the death over a handkerchief, dropped a senseless mass without having dared to raise a hand to guard against the blow. Something like a sigh ran through the group of men. The leader sat motionless, his gun still clasped by the barrel, and ranged his baleful gaze over the spectators, allowing his glance to dwell for a few moments on each. Then his shrill, whining voice commanded—

"Detel, step up here!"

Chuckle-Luck's opponent was something of a craven, for on hearing his sentence he began mouthing incoherent appeals, and even went through the blasphemy of clasping his hands as though praying for mercy. Like Chuckle-Luck he wore several revolvers in his belt, yet he never thought to draw one.

Gentleman Ralph spoke only the once. His fierce gaze repeated the order, however, and, after the first frenzied outburst, Detel began advancing, weeping and begging at every step. The grim figure waited, stirring not a muscle, till the man stood beside him. Then the improvised club rose and fell, and Detel dropped across the insensible Chuckle-Luck.

"Perhaps now we'll have order in this camp," wailed the thin voice.

Uncle Dick fumbled with his gun, his nerves unstrung at the beastly cruelty of it all.

"Yes, that's how he bosses 'em. It takes his kind to hold such critters to the mark. But what a cold-blooded devil!"

WITHOUT further speech Gentleman Ralph rode his horse to the rear of the shack and, for a moment, the mountaineer feared he had been discovered, but the leader simply desired to reassure his prisoner. Crowding his horse against the back of the shack he looked in at the small window and, in a reedy treble, comforted—

"You won't be annoyed again, Miss No-Name."

"Oh, you brute! You brute!" piteously sobbed the girl.

"But I saved two lives. They'd have cut each other into ribbons," he reminded.

Then he gave a little cackling laugh that had nothing human about it and added:

"They're hard—bitter hard! Only discipline of the right kind can keep them in line."

"You are worse than they! So much worse!" she passionately cried.

"Where is there another man who can leave a beautiful young woman alone with a band like mine and come back and find her unharmed?" he jeered.

She did not answer, so he continued:

"Very well, we'll pass over all that. Have you remembered things yet "

She continued her silence and, after waiting patiently for her to speak, he warned:

"You had better make a great effort. I'm beginning to fall in love with you. Just now gold can buy me away from love, but later—I fear not. A ride into Mexico—a long honeymoon. Better remember."

Uncle Dick raised his revolver. Reason urged him to wait, to make sure of the girl's release. With thumb on the hammer he fought a mighty battle to control his honest rage. It had been given to no other to have Gentleman Ralph at the end of a gun, yet the bandit leader had spoken the truth when he boasted that only he could have left the girl with the gang and find her unharmed on his return. Uncle Dick pictured the outlaws rushing upon him if he killed their chief; pictured the girl defenseless if he should fall. He lowered his weapon.

"I'll give you an hour to prepare for a treasure-hunt or a honeymoon," said the outlaw as the girl continued silent.

With a whimpering laugh he bowed in mock gallantry, backed his horse almost against the rock behind which Uncle Dick was concealed and rode clear of the shack.

HIS horse was headed for the lower end of the cañon, and the mountaineer's hopes for an immediate rescue were reviving when there sounded on the still air a faint *boom, boom* from the upper end of the cañon.

With a drive of his spurs Gentleman Ralph whe led his horse and plung d to the edge of the sullen group about the fire and raised a hand for silence. Instantly they ceased their mumbled undertones as they stared at him apprehensively and waited. Apparently they had not caught the alarm, but with their growling voices quieted, and their ears called to attention, they could not miss the sinister significance in the half a dozen shots now being fired at irregular intervals.

With a wave of his arm Gentleman Ralph yanked his horse about and shrilly commanded—

"After me!"

Even as they were rushing to their horses to follow their leader, Ralph checked his mount and brought him around with his front feet sawing the air. The mellow notes of a bugle were sounding "advance" at the mouth of the cañon.

"Sojers!" bleated an outlaw, leaving his horse and dashing frantically toward the precipitous cliff.

With a frenzied spring as the cruel spurs lifted him into the air, Ralph's horse leaped across the man's path and the toe of the bandit leader's boot caught him under the chin and hurled him to the ground.

"Every man to his horse!" ordered the leader.

Chuckle-Luck, his dead senses awakened by his master's voice, crawled to his feet and stood shaking his wounded head, trying to grasp the situation. Gentleman Ralph gave an excellent exhibition of his power over the gang when he commanded:

"Chuckle-Luck, take twelve men and ride down the cañon and learn what that bugle means. The rest of you follow me up the cañon. We'll shoot our way out through the end that is the weaker. Homer, see the shack is made tight. Our prisoner mustn't get out to walk into a bullet. Chuckle will lead his men back here if he finds he's outnumbered, pick up the girl and make for the back-trail where we'll be waiting for him. If I'm beaten back I'll get the girl and make the mouth of the cañon. The girl must go with us!"

"What if we're both beaten back, or both find we can ride through?" growled Chuckle-Luck.

"If we're both beaten back we'll meet here and join forces for a rush. If you find you can ride through stand them off till I can come to you. Remember, it's hanging if you're taken alive."

"Detel's coming to his senses," informed one of the gang.

"Prop him against the door of the shack. Ah, he opens his eyes. Detel, do you understand me? Stay here and don't let the girl get out. We'll be back soon. Forward!"

With his detachment at his heels he disappeared in the darkness, pounding toward the back door where the firing was increasing in volume. Chuckle-Luck, with a round of oaths, pulled his guns and led his men down the cañon. The notes of the bugle were now being punctuated by the staccato bark of rifle and revolver.

This seemed to be Uncle Dick's golden

opportunity. He glided from behind the rock and suddenly bumped into a lithe figure and grappled with it, only to find his fingers gripping the greasy body of a savage. Crooked Arm's voice was gagged by a knife held between his teeth. He carried a revolver in one hand and a length of rawhide in the other. It was patent he had witnessed the departure of the band and knew that but one man was left behind to stand guard.

Uncle Dick caught him by the arm and shook him, whispering:

"He must be taken alive. He knows something I must know. Count your coup by being the first to strike him with the empty hand."

Crooked Arm put up his weapons and stole round the shack, Uncle Dick following at his heels. The man Detel had managed to rise to his feet and was facing the fire, his mind reeling in confusion. Crooked Arm leaped upon him and bore him to the ground and counted his coup just as Uncle Dick joined him and gave a hand in using the rawhide.

"What is the matter? Who is it at that door? I am Isobel Deland—a prisoner!" cried out the girl.

"Thank God, Miss Mary—Miss Isobel, you've remembered your name!" replied Uncle Dick.

"Uncle Dick?" she tremulously queried.

"Same old cuss," he roared. "We'll have you out of there in a minute. The road-agents are attacked at both ends of the cañon. Hi! Crooked Arm! Back here behind the shack! Some of the devils are coming, chased in by Yellow Bear and his men! Miss Isobel, down on the floor! Bullets will be flying mighty soon."

Down the cañon came the thundering clatter of horses at a mad gallop. The foremost riders, with the masked leader at their head, swerved in toward the shack. Uncle Dick jumped into the flare of the fire, and the bandit leader exclaimed shrilly, raised a revolver and pulled the trigger, but the weapon was empty. As he hurled it aside and snatched another from under his cloak, Uncle Dick opened fire, causing the leader's horse to leave the ground in a terrific spring.

Crooked Arm raised the war-cry of the Arapaho and began firing wildly from the other corner of the building. Gentleman Ralph plunged across the lane of light, his men following, lying low in the saddle and firing at the mountaineer. As they vanished down the cañon Yellow Bear and his braves raced exultingly into view. The chief was waving a ghastly trophy above his head, the sight of which caused Crooked Arm to howl most enviously. For a brief moment the Indians were to be seen and then, like their quarry, they were swallowed up by the darkness.

"He'd rather have that scalp than five thousand dollars reward!" snorted Uncle Dick, turning to the door and calling for Crooked Arm to join him.

Crooked Arm, however, had surrendered to the lust of battle. The spectacle of his chief pursuing the bandits and brandishing a scalp was too much for the young brave, and he forgot the carefully planned teamwork with the mountaineer. The opportunity to win a great name and count many coups sent him running after his fellows, howling like a fiend.

"If they'd only shut off their yelling till after it's all over we might do something," he muttered. "Now that —— young pup has left me to get Miss Isobel up the rocks alone. Hi, honey! It's Uncle Dick. I'm coming in for to fetch you out of this hole."

SHE did not answer him and for a moment his heart seemed to cease beating. He feared one of the outlaws' random bullets had found its way through the flimsy shack. His trembling hand was fumbling at the heavy bar across the door, when he was horrified to behold the outlaws retreating pell-mell from down the cañon. Nor were the Arapahoes giving ground ahead of them as was to have been expected.

By some chance maneuver in the darkness at the mouth of the cañon Chuckle-Luck's band had joined forces with the men under Gentleman Ralph, and the united body had managed to swing clear of the Arapahoes and now had an open path to the back door with all the Indians behind them. From the heart of the blackness streaks of fire advertised the rear-guard action. Satanta continued to blow his bugle, but the outlaws were no longer to be fooled by him.

Bending over the man Detel the mountaineer relieved him of the two revolvers in his belt and, seating himself before the shack, began raking the head of the retreating column. He shouted hoarsely in

triumph as the man in the black mask lurched forward in his saddle.

Then his fighting spirit became paralyzed as he recognized one of the two horsemen nearest him. One sat erect, bareheaded, with his arms pinioned at his side. The other, protected by the prisoner and his horse, rode low with a hand guiding the prisoner's steed.

"Oh, Lord! They've got Joe Peace!" gasped Uncle Dick ceasing his fire so as not to hit his young friend.

Peace now saw him and cried out:

"Uncle Dick! Uncle Dick! They've got me! Look out for Keene!"

Before he could reply to the despairing call, Yellow Bear, at the head of his Arapahoes, tore in close to the side of the cliff and presented a barrier between the bandits and the shack. The fleeing horsemen at once swerved toward the opposite side of the cañon. From out of the darkness came a thin, strident voice encouraging:

"They're only Indians, boys. Hang on to your man. The trail is clear ahead."

Uncle Dick rubbed his eyes to make sure he was not dreaming as the chase and pursuit returned to the night. Finally he exclaimed—

"—— me! They've got Joe!"

Only one of the Indians remained with him. This was Crooked Arm, who proudly displayed a red furrow across his chest.

"I have won a war-name," he exulted. "The white men run. We will not take the medicine-woman up the cliff."

"They've snagged Joey Peace!" mumbled Uncle Dick. "H got into the cañon during the first of the fighting, and they've gone and snagged him lickety-split!"

"They will not come back! The Arapahoes are great warriors!" chanted Crooked Arm.

"Hush that chatter or I'll lambast you!" growled Uncle Dick. "I've got trouble enough without you chipping in. Oh Lord! I dasn't look! If she should be——"

He couldn't finish it. His hands shook so he could not remove the bar and Crooked Arm did it for him. As the door swung open the light from the camp-fire fed into the small room. The girl was stretched out on the floor. With a low sob of anguish Uncle Dick dropped beside her, believing her dead from a chance bullet. Then he shouted joyously as he failed to find any wound and observed that she still breathed. Knocking the curious Crooked Arm aside he rushed to Detel and pawed him over until he located a flask of whisky. Returning to the girl he forced a mouthful of the burning liquor through her clenched teeth, and she rewarded him by choking and coughing spasmodically and at last opened her eyes.

"It's Uncle Dick, honey," he soothed as she stared wildly up into his face.

Her fear vanished and she faintly said:

"Of course—Uncle Dick—I'm Isobel Deland of Santa Fé. My uncle was taking me East. I saw——"

She put her hands to her face and began to weep.

"That's right. Have a good cry," he encouraged in a jerky voice. "Always do it myself when I'm upset."

"But where are they?" she whispered, her eyes distending with terror. "That man in the mask—who talks like a woman. I'm afraid of him worse than I am of death—a million deaths. If you could hear him laugh! He isn't human!"

He helped her to her feet, soothing:

"They're gone. If they manage to drive the Injuns back we'll hear the shooting and we'll go up the cliff. The road-agents don't know anything about the path, and two minutes' start is as good as a week, but I don't reckon they'll try to get back. They've got enough of fighting, thanks to my friends, the Arapahoes. I winged their boss, the cuss that gives you the shivers, but not enough to stop his yapping. If I'd killed him it would have been the best job I ever done."

"If you had seen and heard what I have!" she sobbed, leaning against him for support.

He sought to comfort her by reminding—

"Yet some good came of it, so long as it made you remember things."

"I remember all," she sadly answered. "I'll tell you about it some time. I'm too ashamed to tell it now."

"Reckon I kno ," he murmured, stroking her disheveled hair. "Your uncle was a weak man rather than a bad man. He was led into it. I was with him when he died. Yes, my dear, he's dead—died happy to know you was with me. I was behind the shack when that brute Chuckle-Luck teased you to tell about the gold. I was there when Ralph asked you if you remembered things."

"So long as he believed I had lost my memory I knew it gave me an advantage. If I told him he'd have no further use for me."

"Yet you was willing to tell when Chuckle-Luck threatened my old hide. Reckon I won't never forget that. And I'm mighty glad the worst is known and is over, and that you've got your mem'ry back."

"It came back to me all at once when they stopped the stage-coach down the pass and took me out. They had one torch burning and I saw them with their masks on. I remembered then how I rode my horse out on a shelf of rock and watched them rob a coach. Till I saw that, I thought they were traders banded together by fear of the Indians. They had left me behind in their hiding-place. I found some gold—and something else—something that frightened me. I forgot uncle's orders to stay there and tried to overtake them. I followed a trail up into the hills.

"The first I knew I was out on a platform of rock. I saw them below me and was pleased. I was about to call out to them, to make signals, when they hurried into the woods. Then I was terribly frightened, thinking the Indians were coming. I had seen my uncle among them—and the man called Chuckle-Luck and the man called Charlie. Then, to my relief, a stage-coach, not Indians, came up the road. To my horror my uncle and his friends poured out of the woods, all wearing something over their faces—then the robbery."

"I knew it was like that," he comforted. "Was this critter of a Ralph with them?"

"Never while I was with them. If I'd heard his voice I should always have remembered it."

"When you found the nuggets you found something else that scared you?"

She nodded.

"Dead men's bones?" he prompted.

Again she nodded.

"In the pitcher you made you said the bones ought to be where it was dark," he prompted.

"It was a deep opening under the cliff, as if the river at some time had gouged it out. At the back of this opening was a crack in the wall that led into a cave. It was in there I found them—the nuggets and the bones."

"You could find the place again?"

"I never want to. It was too terrible. It was on the river, the Purgatory they called it. At least some called it that. Others called it the Picketwire. Perhaps you can find it. If you do I hope there is lots of gold and that it will bring you luck."

"Not so fast, young lady. I'm too old to turn gold-hunter on my own hook. If any gold is laying round loose in a cave on the Purgatory it's yours by right of discovery. If I can locate it it must be yours."

Crooked Arm thrust his head through the door and said—

"Cut-Hand come."

"Who is with you besides the Indians?" she asked. "Is Mr. Peace, or Mr. Keene?"

"No, no," he hurriedly replied. "Both started to hunt for you, but we got separated. Hi! What is it now?"

The last was spoken as Crooked Arm's head reappeared.

"MANY horses coming—the fighting is over."

"By Hen, that don't sound like it!" cried Uncle Dick leaping through the door with both guns down, as he heard the yelling and shooting up the cañon. "Get the medicine-woman back to the path. I'll follow you. Miss Isobel, we've got to do some climbing, but we have plenty of time and there's no danger."

"I'm not afraid now," she quietly assured.

"Path no good," said Crooked Arm. "Yellow Bear and the Araphahoes fire guns in the air. When we go back to our big village we will set fire to the grass to tell the women that we have scalps."

"Shut up!" hissed Uncle Dick.

Crooked Arm's words proved true, however, for within a few minutes the Arapahoes, chanting and yowling, galloped up to the camp-fire, waving two scalps, alternately rejoicing and mourning for their three empty saddles. As all the fighting had been carried on while both sides were riding furiously and masked by the darkness, the casualties had been light. Still, in addition to the two outlaws killed outright, several were supposed to have been severely wounded, in addition to the injury done the leader by Uncle Dick's bullet. With the exception of the two slain and scalped the outlaws carried all their men from the cañon.

Satanta reined in in front of the shack, a

devil's mood reflected in his savage face. He was still incensed at Uncle Dick's interference with his scheme for a wide alliance of plains tribes in a mighty campaign against the whites. His part in the night's business had practically been forced upon him because of his fear of Colonel Leavenworth, who by this time must have received Wooton's talking paper, betraying the scheme. Could his sympathies have had full play they would have been with the bandits, who at least warred on white men. Being one of the most astute dissemblers ever produced by an Indian nation he had endeavored to conceal his true feelings and play his part realistically. Committed to the fray he philosophically decided that a bandit's scalp was next best to taking an immigrant's or a soldier's scalp, but now the fighting was over he was enraged to know he had not counted a coup.

Seeking an outlet for some of his venom his gaze wandered to Detel.

"The Arapahoes shout and make ready to dance two scalps, while three of their warriors are missing. Yellow Bear must take another scalp before he can count coups with the white men."

The prisoner did not understand a word spoken, but he correctly interpreted the evil glance and the tone of the chief's sneering voice. Twisting his head he caught Uncle Dick's eye and hoarsely begged:

"Save me from the torture, boss! Don't let them devils play with me! Promise to shoot me first!"

"You shall not be tortured. I'll shoot you first," replied Uncle Dick, working through the now silent throng of Arapahoes.

"After Yellow Bear has roasted that white man and danced his scalp he can dance and sing," continued Satanta. "The medicine of his tribe will be angry if he lets the trade stand three for two."

The shouting was hushed. Yellow Bear gazed gloomily over his circle of braves. Economy of man-power was ever the essence of Indian strategy in warfare. Many a large war-party has been successfully withstood by a smaller number of men, because the leader of the attacking force was not willing to pay a certain minimum price for a complete victory. To lose three warriors in a running fight and kill only two of the foe was in no sense a triumph.

"If my friend Settainte had not called out his name, but had kept still after blowing the bugle, we would have killed more of the whites," Yellow Bear bitterly retorted.

"The name of Settainte is big medicine. When I shouted it the white men ran," tersely replied the Kiowa chief.

"Some of the white men were wounded and may die," spoke up Uncle Dick. "Their friends took them away."

"A warrior counts only the coups he knows he has made," sneered the Kiowa, turning his gaze on the prisoner.

"—— his snake eyes! Make him keep 'em off'n me, boss!" yelped Detel.

Yellow Bear sank his head and pondered on Satanta's scornful words. Gradually he swung his gaze about until it rested on the terrified countenance of Detel. The man was his enemy. The Arapahoes had come to the cañon with Cut-Hand for the express purpose of killing off the bad whites. The mountaineer had declared them to be bad flesh. White men offered much money for their dead bodies. Whether a dead man wore his hair or not, seemed immaterial, but to affront the tribal medicine was disastrous. He straightened and, staring at Satanta, announced:

"The Arapahoes will roast that man. Settainte is welcome to watch."

The Kiowa did not miss the slur in this speech to the effect he had no part in the proceedings except that of an onlooker. The dark face grew convulsed with rage; then smoothed out as he mastered himself, and his voice was bland as he rejoined:

"Yellow Bear is a great warrior. When he loses three braves in a surprize attack he sends three of his enemies after them. The White Bear will watch and learn from the Yellow Bear how a white man should be roasted."

"What they sayin', boss?" babbled Detel. "They're reckonin' to play me dirt, boss. I'm plumb skeered. Don't let them prod me with their —— knives."

"Hush your noise! Show some spunk!" commanded Uncle Dick. Then he turned to Yellow Bear. "This man is my prisoner. He knows something I want to know. He must not be roasted. He will be turned over to the Long Knives and hung. The Arapahoes shall receive a wagon-load of presents for him. They shall make many feasts for their tribal medicine. The Turtle, the Ear of Corn and the Flat Pipe all

of stone, shall be much pleased with the feasts."

WHILE tempted by the prospect of many presents, Uncle Dick's declaration stung the Yellow Bear's self-respect. Satanta was laughing inwardly to see him dictated to by one white man. Then again his Indian mind could not perceive any justice in allowing soldiers to kill a man they had no part in capturing. The Arapahoes had done the fighting and had lost two men. It was an affront to his logic and his conception of fair play. Yet Cut-Hand was a mighty power with the Arapahoes, and Yellow Bear sought to soften his own insistence by asking:

"Cut-Hand has one prisoner, the medicine-woman. How can he claim the white man?"

"Because he is my prisoner. Because he knows something I want to know," bluntly answered Uncle Dick.

"But he shall tell all he knows over the fire," protested Yellow Bear.

"He will talk very much," spoke up Satanta.

"The chief of the Kiowas is angry because he did not count a coup," shot back Uncle Dick.

Satanta scowled murderously, remembered himself and shifted his expression to one of mild reproach. His voice was unruffled as he commented—

"The Kiowas do not let white men tell them what they shall do with their prisoners."

"The Arapahoes are old friends of Cut-Hand. He has never lied to them. They will do more for him than the Kiowas would. Colonel Leavenworth will tell Settainte what he shall do with his prisoners and Settainte will listen and obey."

Satanta turned away his head until he could control his facial expression. The Arapahoes were quick to note how truly the shot had scored. Yellow Bear hesitated. The friendship between the mountaineer and his people was something sacred. Uncle Dick might have carried his point, because of the Arapahoes' great love for him, had not Crooked Arm at that moment become a victim to ambition. Swelling with importance and irritating the wound on his chest to a more frightful appearance, he proudly informed:

"The white man is my prisoner. I counted coup by being the first to touch him with my bare hand."

Satanta laughed mockingly. Yellow Bear's eyes lighted in triumph.

"Ugh!" he exploded. "What does Cut-Hand say to that?"

Uncle Dick bit his lip. It was true he had permitted his young companion to count his coup by touching the outlaw first; this had been done to aid him in winning a war-name. His hold on the Arapahoes was centered in their firm belief that he would never deceive them.

"Crooked Arm did touch him first," he promptly admitted. "The white man was like one dead. I left him without touching him, in order to give Crooked Arm a chance to count his coup. Crooked Arm is a brave man. The white man is prisoner of the Arapahoes."

"Then Cut-Hand has nothing to say if my friend, Yellow Bear, teaches the White Bear how to roast a white man," taunted Satanta.

"They mean p'izen, boss. Gimme a bullet first," whispered Detel.

"Never have the Arapahoes asked anything of me without getting it," gravely continued Uncle Dick, catching and holding Yellow Bear's gaze. "Never has Cut-Hand asked anything of the Arapahoes but what it was gladly given to him. If I now ask for Yellow Bear's ponies I will find them waiting for me at my lodge on the mountain. The Bear can ask for anything of mine and it will be left at his lodge.

"Now I ask for this white man. Give him to me and he will be punished. In return for him you shall get many guns. I promise it. You shall get many goods for your women. I promise it. If the Kiowa laughs at you for not building a fire under this man, ask him where his presents are? Where is the bright cloth your women love? This man is worth many ponies, many guns, many bales of cloth, if you do not burn him. The Arapahoes would be fools to burn up many ponies and cloth and guns. Even the Kiowa would not do that. He would make a trade."

As Wooton ceased, Yellow Bear turned on his heel and made a gesture for several of his leading men to join him. Crooked Arm was called into the conference and went, swollen with great pride. Uncle Dick knew their decision must stand. If the verdict were against Detel, then the

girl must be removed before she guessed the truth.

At first Uncle Dick believed he had won, but Satanta's mocking gaze and contemptuous smile aroused the devil in Yellow Bear. Detel seemed to sense that the decision was going against him.

"Help me, boss," he whispered. "I know things ye want to know. I know things that'll make it worth yer while to listen to. I know who Gentleman Ralph is." His voice suddenly rose in volume as his terror flogged him on. "I know who he is, —— his eyes! Git me out of this an' turn me over to the sojers an' I'll split."

The Indians filed back. In a last effort Detel yelled:

"Keep 'em off, boss! I'll tell who Gentleman Ralph is!"

A rifle cracked a hundred feet away, and Detel's body jerked convulsively as the heavy bullet smashed through his heart.

For a few seconds there was a tense tableau; then came a shrill mocking laugh, the glimpse of a shadowy figure and the sound of fleet hoofs. With howls of rage the Indians fired after the retreating figure and then ran to their horses to give chase.

"Poor devil!" muttered Uncle Dick. "Reckon it was best that way, even if I didn't learn what I'd give a jug to know. To take his confession and not save him from the torture would have been bad medicine. To have shot him would 'a' been a nasty business. I know that Yellow Bear, for the first time in his life, was going to refuse me something. Little Raven would have given in."

Satanta crouched by the fire, making no offer to join in the pursuit. When the Arapahoes up the cañon gave voice to their rage—sufficient testimony that they had lost their quarry—the Kiowa rose and, leaping on his pony, galloped down the cañon at top speed.

CHAPTER VII

AT THE HAPPY FORTUNE

ENTERING the shack Uncle Dick found the girl crouching in one corner, her fingers to her ears. She had understood nothing of the debate over Detel's fate, but she had heard his pleading to be saved from the torture, the shot which ended his life and the high-pitched, mocking laugh.

"Well, young woman, it's all over. We can go home," faltered Uncle Dick.

"I heard that poor wretch begging. He is quiet now. Have the Indians got him?" she whispered.

"He wasn't tortured—died without pain. Best way out of it, as otherwise he'd have been hung. We'll start for home in a minute. Wait for me here."

He passed out and closed the door after him. The Arapahoes were standing around the dead outlaw, muttering guttural expressions of rage. Uncle Dick joined them and at once learned the cause of their anger. Detel had been scalped. Snatching up a blanket, he threw it over the body to conceal the gory spectacle from the girl when she left the shack. In Arapaho he asked:

"How is this? Do my brothers scalp a man shot by an enemy?"

"Settainte did it while we were shooting at the man who keeps his face covered," was the bitter reply. "He stole that scalp. That is why he went away so quick."

"My Arapaho brothers will do well to make no bargains with the Kiowas. They are without honor," counseled the mountaineer.

"White Bear will find his coup is filled with bad medicine," declared Yellow Bear.

"Cover the body with rocks," ordered Uncle Dick. "It is not for white women to see. There are presents at my lodge on top of the mountain. How many ride with me?"

"I will send some of my men to bring our teepees near the mouth of the pass. The rest will ride with you," said Yellow Bear.

Dispatching Crooked Arm to bring up his horse, Uncle Dick borrowed two ponies from the chief. Then calling Miss Isobel from the shack, he placed her on a pony and rode beside her. The Arapahoes scurried ahead and also guarded the rear.

At the mouth of the cañon the band halted, and dismounted excepting the few the chief directed to bring up the camp equipage. Crooked Arm had already gone over the cliff and would join them at sunrise, bringing his and the mountaineer's animals.

Although urged to sleep by Uncle Dick, the girl's nerves were too taut to relax

just then. The knowledge that she was safe seemed to overwhelm her at first, and she showed no desire to talk; nor was Uncle Dick in a loquacious mood. He was much perturbed over Joe Peace. It seemed to be the working of an ironically cruel fate that, just as the old mountain man should effect the release of one of his young friends, another should become the outlaws' prey. And what new discovery did Peace's warning against Keene indicate?

His fruitless cogitations were broken by Miss Isobel's frank admission.

"Now I will talk. It's about the gold."

"S'pose we pass it over," gently suggested Uncle Dick. "Let's talk about pleasant things."

"No. I must tell it before my memory slips away from me again," she persisted.

"That will never happen. You can't ever be shocked any worse than you have been tonight. You've stood the last and hardest test mighty well."

"Then it will always be in my mind. Perhaps if I tell what little I know it will be easier for me."

Uncle Dick decided this was sound logic and nodded for her to begin, so she drew the blanket closer about her shoulders, snuggled up to him.

"MY FATHER left the East for California in 1855, taking me with him. My mother had died when I was an infant, and there was nothing to keep him back East. His brother, who had gone to the coast two years earlier, wrote and urged him to come and make a fortune. Father seemed to have no ambitions, probably because of the loss of my mother, but the thought of winning a fortune for me decided him to make the trip. I was eleven years old at the time. We went by the way of the isthmus. I was placed in a mission school selected by my uncle, and kept there until my father died, when I was sixteen.

"It was then that my uncle became my guardian. He placed me with a family in Sacramento where I lived happily for two years, while he worked in the mines. Sometimes he would have considerable gold; then again we would be very poor. He always paid my way, however. After the two years I was shifted about quite frequently until, a year ago, he suddenly decided to return to the States.

"We came to Santa Fé with a wagon-train, but instead of pushing on we remained there. I soon suspected my uncle was in bad company. He was not bad at heart and was always good to me, but he could not endure the thought of returning East as poor as when he left. It became a mania with him to get gold enough to finish his days in decent comfort and leave me enough to live on. He tried gambling, hoping to make a fortune overnight. I remember when he came home one morning flushed with success. He had won twenty thousand dollars and we were to start at once for the States, but fate was against us. We had to wait a bit and he went back and lost all his money. After that he seemed to lose his lust for gambling and would sit for hours, silent and miserable.

"Then happened the incidents which were never clear to me until I sat on my horse and saw him helping to rob a stage-coach. It began with his acquaintance with a man he called Charlie, a man his own age with a whimsical face which was always laughing. I suspected nothing when he told me we were to go East under the protection of a large band of traders.

"We traveled through Raton Pass, going through your gate at night. I rode a horse and was muffled in a blanket, as my uncle did not want any one to know I was a woman. There were three of us, he and the man called Charlie and myself."

"You were the three that wouldn't come in and eat," broke in Uncle Dick. "It was about three weeks ago."

She nodded and resumed:

"Nothing out of the ordinary happened until we stopped at a river, Le Purgatoire. I was surprized that my uncle and Charlie should decide to remain there until the other traders joined them, for it was a wild, desolate spot. Charlie pretended to discover the opening under the rocks. I know now that it must have been used by the outlaws many times. We had brought three pack-animals loaded with provisions and ammunition, and we lived comfortably while waiting for the supposed traders to join us. They came in, two or three at a time, and either Charlie or uncle always hastened to meet them, probably to explain the deception being played upon me.

"Some of the men treated me courteously, while others seemed offended because I was there, and the man called Chuckle-Luck growled much about 'a petticoat being mixed in business.' I thought nothing of that. It was natural they shouldn't want to be bothered with a woman while passing through the Indian country, but to get away from them I used to ride my pony clear of the cañon and wander along the banks.

"One day, however, an Indian chased me and I was badly frightened. I escaped back into the cañon and met two of the men and told them what had happened. They rode on and I heard shots. When they returned they said the Indian had escaped, that I mustn't go out alone any more. After that they were absent a few at a time, and at nights some of them would be counting money. I couldn't understand what we were waiting for, as there was a round score of them when all happened to be present. Several times I asked my uncle why we didn't start for the East, but he would answer something about the Indians and promise me we should go very soon.

"I've spoken of the day I was left alone and explored the recess we camped in. It's a short distance beyond a twisted pine that grows on the river bank. At first when I found the crack or crevice in the rear wall I thought nothing of it. Then, being curious, I got a splinter of pine for a torch and examined the narrow opening more closely. Passing my torch through, I discovered the opening led into a chamber. None of the band had ever noticed it, I am positive. It was in the thick shadows and, if one saw it, one would think it was only a crack in the solid rock.

I slipped through the opening and there at my feet, saw the two nuggets. I had been in California long enough to know that gold specimens weren't likely to be found on the floor of a cave in that fashion, and I preserved them. Advancing deeper into the cave, I was frightened to find it was apparently a charnel-house. One end seemed filled with bones, but I gave them only a glance and fled back through the opening. I was convinced it was an ancient burial-place of the Indians. No good would come of telling the men, as some of them, including my uncle, were superstitious, so I kept still about it; but I didn't like to remain in the place alone.

"At first it didn't bother me; then I began to fancy I could hear some one moving round in there. I knew it was absurd, yet it worked on my nerves until I couldn't endure it. So one day when the men began bustling about to go on some errand, I made up my mind to follow them—not to spy on them, for I didn't suspect that anything was wrong. I wanted to be near them. Then followed my ride out on the shelf of rock and my discovery that they were robbers."

"You made a mighty good picture of that cañon—when you was forgetful," mused Uncle Dick.

"I sketched it several times before the Indian chased me. It's a wild spot. The stunted pine near our shelter under the rocks always suggested to me an evil guardian of the place. I used to imagine the crooked arms were waving me back. I've been in many rough places in the mountains, but never where the very atmosphere seemed to warn one away, as it did there."

"You never, while with the outlaws, saw any one you believe to be this chap in the black mask?"

"Never. I'm positive of that. If he commanded the band he did it through a messenger."

CROOKED ARM now arrived with the mountaineer's horse. Uncle Dick sprang to his feet and, pointing to the kindling east, said—

"My brothers, we can start now."

In single file the cavalcade traveled to the mouth of the pass. Reaction was now telling on Miss Isobel. Uncle Dick observed her swaying in the saddle, so he rode beside her and supported her with his arm.

"I'm tired," she faintly confessed, trying to smile.

Now that he was likely to meet white men, Yellow Bear concealed the outlaw's scalp which he had been flaunting on his bridle. Crooked Arm reluctantly drew a blanket over his blood-smeared chest. Half way up the road the travelers met a small freight-train which displayed symptoms of a panic until Uncle Dick rode ahead and vouched for his companions.

"We know it's all right, long as ye're with 'em, Wooton," replied the leader, a

grizzly veteran. "We traveled all night so's we could have a full day on quitting this end of the pass. Ye got a sick man up to your place. Some of yer men fetched him in from the road jest as we passed through the gate."

"A sick man?" repeated Uncle Dick.

"Wal, I reckon he'd been shot up by somebody. The Injun squaw seemed to know him. We was in a hustle to get along an' didn't stick to learn nothin'. Sure them cusses behind ye won't sneak after us an' try to raise our hair?"

"They're my friends," said Uncle Dick.

"That makes 'em all right, but I never see a Injun yet but what I had a sneakin' suspicion that he'd got a scalp or two hid on him somewhere."

Uncle Dick suppressed a smile as he wondered what the freighter would say and believe if he could glance under Yellow Bear's blanket.

"None of the Arapahoes will harm you. Down below you may strike Satanta and some of his Kiowas, but they're few in numbers. Cuss them out and keep up a bold front, and they won't fuss with you any."

Falling back beside the girl, he began to speculate on who the sick man could be. Some one the Quail knew, he finally decided. As Miss Isobel had been hard put to it to keep awake while her guardian conferred with the freighter, she had heard nothing of their conversation, so Uncle Dick deemed it wise to say nothing about the sick or wounded man until he had investigated.

When they came up to the gate, the Mexican attendant gave a yell on seeing the Indians and would have bolted, had he not heard Uncle Dick's stentorian voice ordering him back. Recognizing his employer, the Mexican hurriedly raised the gate, cowering beneath the cold gaze of Yellow Bear.

The Quail came waddling from the cook-house, ignoring her people in her zeal to reach the girl.

"Preety," she cried, lifting the drowsy Isobel from the pony and patting her cheek, but there was nothing in the Quail's deportment that would lead a stranger to infer that Miss Isobel had been stolen and had unexpectedly returned.

"The Quail will say nothing about the wounded man brought here," commanded Uncle Dick. "The medicine-woman has had no sleep since she was stolen. Get her to bed at once. Give her food when she wakes up."

Turning to Yellow Bear, he pointed to the cook-house, saying:

"Camp back of that. My people will bring you food. Here is Big Knife. He will bring presents to you."

Big Knife, smoking some of his patron's tobacco and looking exceedingly well-fed, ambled forward. Receiving Uncle Dick's orders concerning the two mule-loads of trade-goods left by Keene, he started for the shed back of the corral. Uncle Dick hurried into the house.

The Arapaho woman was busy with her charge in the latter's room. Uncle Dick passed to a guest-room and peeped in. A man was stretched on the cot, slumbering heavily. Tiptoeing to his side, Uncle Dick gave a glance at the haggard face and exclaimed aloud:

"By Hen! If it ain't Joe Peace! Why—why, Joe, how did you work it?"

Peace opened his eyes and for a moment stared at the mountaineer without seeming to recognize him. Then he cried:

"Where is Miss Mary? Is she safe?"

"I wouldn't be back if she wasn't," said Uncle Dick with a wide grin. "If you ain't able to talk don't say a word, but I'm dying to know how it all happened."

"You ain't any more curious than I am to know how the —— you got down into that hole. I thought I had gone crazy when I saw you," murmured Peace. "Take a look at my arm, and I'll give my yarn and then hear yours. The Quail dressed it. Reckon she did all that was necessary."

Uncle Dick drew up a stool and removed the bandage from the upper part of Joe's right arm. There he found a bullet hole through the flesh near the shoulder, but the bone was unharmed.

"Bump on the head hurt worse'n the bullet," informed Peace, as Uncle Dick redressed the hurt. "And I made myself a present of that. Lucky bump at that, too. They was fetching me up the road and it was black as ink. I managed to work my hands free and untie the rope round my feet. I spurred to one side and threw myself from the horse. They fired and, by luck, got me through the arm. I don't remember being hit, for when I struck the ground it nearly knocked my

head off. I figured that the horse kept on going, and they thought I was aboard and gave chase. Next thing I knew the Mexican was bending over me and yelling to Big Knife. They fetched me here and the Quail did the rest."

"Boy, I was never so took back in my life as when I heard you yell out and saw them toting you by the shack!" cried Uncle Dick. "I was plumb flabbergasted. Wonder you wasn't hit by some of our lead, seeing how the man leading your nag kept crowding you toward us. How'n sin did you ever fall into their hands?"

"After I came back to the toll-road and found you and your horse gone, I went back and prowled around them trails up there. Must have followed the same one you did, for it led me to the cañon."

"I swung 'way off beyond the cañon, by taking the left-hand trail," broke in Uncle Dick.

"And I followed the other till it started to descend into the cañon. I saw the shack and the gang, so I drew aside from the trail and worked along the top of the eastern wall. About sundown I came to a likely looking spot and decided I could make it. It was near the mouth of the cañon and too near the guard they kept posted there, but, once it was dark, I decided to chance it.

"Say, the minute I got well under way all —— was let loose. Shooting, bugles playing, Injuns howling and white men cussing. I finished by going down in a rush. I supposed there were soldiers sitting into the game, and my idea was to join them, but the Injun cries bothered me. Then some Injuns nearly rode over me and tried to brain me. I couldn't see anything but I could smell them, and I reckon anything on foot was their meat.

"Next I met up with some loud-swearing white men and danged if one of them didn't sight me by the flare of a gun and take a whack at me. Every one seemed to be against me, so I dug back under the cliff, thinking to make a dash for the shack. The road-agents put up a game fight, every one shooting by guess and the whole bunch milling around. Then come more agents and more Injuns. First thing I knew some of them had passed in between me and the cliff and they was fighting all around me. Now I wanted to side in with the Injuns, but I knew if I offered to help they'd pot me for an agent. No soldiers showed up, yet, every once in a while, I heard that bugle play.

"I couldn't go ahead or sneak back. Then a gun went off over my head and I had a glimpse of a tall cuss with a black mask over his phiz. He cracked me over the head with the barrel of his gun, and then some one pulled me on to a horse, me dreaming what I would do in another minute. The minute up, and they had taken my guns, tied my arms, roped my hoofs under the horse's belly and we was traveling somewhere lickety-cut. I had a notion we was out of the cañon. Reckon my senses didn't all clear up till we got close to the fire, and there was you, standing out in front of that little cabin and working your guns, and the agent that had my horse by the bit was trying to crowd me in to catch all the lead. That's the first clear thought I can remember—they was using me to catch lead. Next I knew my mouth was open and I was calling to you."

"LORDY! LORDY!" gasped Uncle Dick. "And they fetched you through the hind end of the cañon and over one of their back-trails to the pass. Which way did your horse go when you took to the ground?"

"Don't know anything about that—just guesswork. They didn't pick me up or finish me off, so they must have chased the nag. But I know we was near the gate."

"The Mexican will know if any horsemen passed through. You yelled something about Keene—for me to look out for him."

The whimsical expression which had accompanied Peace's description of his adventures vanished.

"Keene is one of them," he growled. "And —— his pelt, I'm going to nail him!"

"Was he in the cañon last night? I saw quite a lot of them with their masks off. He wasn't among them, but I didn't get a good look at the ones who went out to relieve the guard."

"I didn't see his face, but I'm sure he was in the cañon last night," said Peace. "There's a tiny shack near the mouth where the guard could take shelter in bad weather. It's on the same side where I came down the cliff. Two or three times I was swept

up to it by the fighting. He may have been down there till the fighting began, but when they was riding up the cañon and I was getting my wits back, one of the gang made game of me, saying, 'Dropped in to see that I didn't talk to Miss Mary, eh?' Now there was only one man who would have said that—Keene."

"He was harking back to your talk to him when you two come near fighting with knives in the next room," murmured Uncle Dick.

"Exactly. And the man who said it was the one next to me on my right, for the cur leading my horse never yipped a word and kept as low over his saddle as a Comanche. The man on my right drew ahead when we struck into the patch of light cast by the fire. He was the chap in the black mask."

Uncle Dick swallowed convulsively and cried:

"I knew you was going to say that! But how about his voice? Didn't you hear him laugh or speak?"

"Bah! No human being was ever cussed with such a voice. A trick of his. You oughter heard him mimic Baptiste to Miss Mary. You'd swear he was the trader himself. Wait till I can get on my feet—maybe tomorrow—then I'm going to see him and have a little fuss."

"You oughter be all right by day after tomorrow anyway. Reckon I'll do a little looking round myself. I want to pay him for two mule-loads of trade-stuff and then help hang him, if he can't prove he's innocent."

"It won't come to hanging, if I see him," said Peace slowly. "We'll both begin shooting promiscu's-like on sight. How's Miss Mary?"

"All beat out. She'll sleep all day most likely."

"I'm hungry to see her and talk with her."

"Tomorrow. Go to sleep. Rest is what you need. The bullet hole won't trouble you much. Now I must talk with the Mexican. We must know whether the agents passed through the gate or turned back."

"We was aiming for it when I quit the saddle. Maybe they turned back though," mumbled Peace, closing his eyes.

Uncle Dick returned to the eating-room and tapped softly on the girl's door. The Quail appeared, holding a finger to her lips, and Uncle Dick nodded, highly pleased that his charge should sleep. Repairing to the kitchen, he asked the Mexican if any horsemen had passed through the gate during the night, bound south.

The Mexican promptly swore by all the saints that no horsemen had used the gate. The barrier was raised only early in the morning to let the freighters through and to bring Peace inside.

Filling his pipe, Uncle Dick walked to the rear of the cook-house, where Yellow Bear and his men were separating the trade-goods into two piles, one for themselves and one for Little Raven and his followers. The division was finally completed and Uncle Dick asked the chief to step aside.

"The men we followed rode up the pass toward the gate. The Mexican says they did not pass through the gate," he informed.

"All Mexicans are liars," calmly replied the chief.

"But this man has worked for me for some time and I believe him."

"Cut-Hand and the Arapahoes would have met them if they had turned back."

"I know, yet I think the Mexican spoke the truth. He wouldn't dare lie for the sake of stealing the toll."

"Then their horses have wings like the thunder-birds, and flew over the mountains," sarcastically suggested the chief, tentatively daubing a bit of vermilion paint on his nose and trying to get the effect by looking cross-eyed.

"There are new trails back from the road and high up—trails you would never suspect unless you stumbled upon them. I want you to send your best trackers to look for signs. They either turned back, or else they have a secret trail that leads over the top of the pass without going through my gate."

Yellow Bear promised:

"My men shall go out after they have eaten. If there is any hidden trail they will find it."

Standing with Yellow Bear before the entrance to the station, Uncle Dick received the reports of the Arapaho scouts. Pieced together, their observations convinced him the gang had taken to both sides of the pass high above the toll-road before reaching the gate. Splitting into small

parties, some of them had turned back, probably returning to their old haunts on the Purgatory. It was Crooked Arm who scored a coup in the mountaineer's estimation by proudly announcing the discovery of an unsuspected trail leading over the summit and tapping the toll-road on the south slope. By following this, and at the expense of an extra hour of rough riding, one could avoid the toll-gate entirely. This trail, Crooked Arm explained, followed one of the terraces which rose in succession from the road to Raton Peak in the east.

After his interesting information had been absorbed, Crooked Arm proudly added—

"Men riding fast have passed south over that trail since sunrise."

"How many?" snapped Uncle Dick.

Crooked Arm held up both hands with the fingers extended and further explained:

"The way is rough from here to the trail, but the trail itself is good for ponies, narrow but clear. I did not follow it back to where it strikes into the road south of the big gate."

"You keep on and you'll win a whole headful of feathers," complimented Uncle Dick in English. Then in Arapaho: "Crooked Arm has done well. His eyes are like an eagle's. He shall have a new rifle when I go where there is a big trading-store."

Then Yellow Bear spoke up:

"The white men have scattered, half going south, half going back toward the river. What does my brother ask the Arapahoes to do?"

Uncle Dick was in a quandary. His resentment against the gang had accumulated slowly. At first it was caused by his natural prejudice against a lawless element, based on the law of self-preservation or the primitive fear that he, personally, might be one of its victims. With the advent of the girl into his life, however, this general bias had evolved into a violent hostility, and, whereas formerly he would have been willing for the authorities to eliminate the nuisance, he now deemed it his duty as an individual to harry the gang and lay the leader by the heels.

"Those who have gone south have probably separated. Some have gone to Cimarron, some to Las Vegas, others to the Valley of the Taos, perhaps to Santa Fé or into Mexico. They've either gone for good or will be back, but those who have returned to the Purgatory will keep together. I think we shall travel back to the river."

"My warriors will ride after we have eaten again," said Yellow Bear with a side glance at the cook-house.

UNCLE DICK was on the point of ordering that a second meal be served the Indians at once, although the first had barely been bolted, when the arrival of the north-bound stage demanded his attention. Several passengers hurried to the eating-room, eager to partake of the excellent fare after rather trying experiences with the average station food.

Halting the driver, Uncle Dick inquired—

"See any agents on your way up the pass?"

The driver shifted his cud of tobacco and admiringly asked:

"How'd ye happen to guess it? I was goin' to tell after I'd et."

"Then you did see some?"

"I wa'n't bothered any, or ye'd heard me bleatin' the minute I hit the top of the pass, but if I didn't see that —— Chuckle-Luck peeking at me from the bush, I never hope to hold ribbons over a overland coach outfit again."

"And he didn't try to hold you up?" asked Uncle Dick incredulously.

"No, sirree! I was watchin' the road ahead as I struck the slope. Somethin' moved in the undergrowth. The grade was steep an' I knew I couldn't make a bolt. I yapped for the passengers to have their stuff ready. The mules have been held up so many times that they got ready to stop. But nothin' happened. I slowed down an' looked into the bush an' got a glimpse of Chuckle's face. He wasn't wearin' a mask but seemed to be hidin'. Well, says I, I give ye yer chance. If ye're too —— proud to hold me up ye can go to ——. An' I passes on an' leaves him."

"Thanks. Better go eat. Injun friends have sort of reduced my supplies and the passengers are getting ahead of you."

The driver bolted for the eating-room but paused to shoot back over his shoulder—

"I was forgettin' to say that I see a friend of yours."

"So?"

"Young Sam Keene, what was hangin'

round here for a few days. He was tryin' to whip his hoss into a gallop, the —— tenderfoot, and the poor animul was streaked with lather as if he'd been goin' it hellity-brindle for a week of Sundays."

Uncle Dick thanked him with a nod and commenced tugging at his iron-gray locks. The stage-driver's gossip upset his plans. The real game was to be found south of the pass. He entered the station and went into Joe Peace's room. There he found Joe awake and disposing of an ample lunch which had been brought in by the Quail.

"The squaw says Miss Mary is sleeping like a top. I was powerful glad to hear it," greeted Peace.

Uncle Dick agreed that this was good news and said:

"A while ago I was saying to you that I reckoned the gang had gone south and that I intended to follow them. Since then, Yellow Bear's bucks have learned that the gang split, part going south and part returning toward the Purgatory. I shifted my bets and decided to track 'em north again. Now comes the north-bound coach and the driver swears he see Chuckle-Luck hiding in the woods beside the road, and that he met Sam Keene riding hard toward the south. So I've come back to my first plan. I ride south."

"They'll scatter. You'll have a hard time finding them, even one at a time."

"That's what I'd opine if they had all gone south, but, with half returning to the Purgatory, it can't be the other half is disbanding. It's dad-burned mystifying. So long as they trifled with the coaches, I left it for the government to give 'em their medicine, but when they troubled my girl they challenged me to fight. I'm peaceful as ——, but after you slap my face about so much I'll show grit."

"I'll go with you," promptly declared Peace. "But how do you know those going north aren't planning to disband?"

"It ain't the country to scatter in. Injuns everywhere. Only white men are in the forts, the folks that agents will steer clear of. In the south they can drift into Mexico or to Californy."

He might have added, if he had felt at liberty to disclose what he believed to be the girl's personal affairs, that he suspected the north-bound party to be in search of the place where the girl had picked up the nuggets. This theory, while forcing itself upon him, did not afford any explanation for Chuckle-Luck's riding south.

"Making for Santa Fé," remarked Peace.

"They'll rest up somewhere on the way. At least Keene must stop and get a fresh mount—probably at Whoa-Haw, this side of Cimarron."

"We'll go where they can be found the thickest," muttered Peace.

Uncle Dick hesitated; then asked—

"You still opine Keene is the leader of the gang?"

"He must be if he is a member of the gang. The rest are common riffraff ruffians."

Uncle Dick agreed to this, saying:

"From what I see of 'em—and I had a pretty good chance to size most of 'em up—there wasn't any man of big caliber except their boss. Chuckle-Luck is a rattling good hold-up man; he knows the work part of it, but he ain't got brains enough to keep the bunch together and under his thumb. But he's good as far as he goes. I'll give him credit for that. He worked hard and cleaned up fine, when operating alone."

"I ain't interested in Chuckle-Luck. When I meet him I'll shoot him, but Keene's the man I'm after, —— his hide! Had the gall to try to make up to Miss Mary. I'll get him if I have to follow him to Mexico City."

"You didn't ought to travel before day after tomorrow," mused Uncle Dick. "See here. S'pose I start at once, while the trail is fresh, and just dog 'em along. If you're able, day after tomorrow, you can come after me. My first stop will be at Whoa-Haw. If I pick up any news there and have to move on before you come, I'll leave word for you at 'Old Tommy's' bar in the Happy Fortune. But I'm free to say I'd feel safer for the girl if you was to stick along here and keep guard."

"I'll stay here two days, if I don't feel fit to pull out before," said Peace. "No rules against my talking to Miss Mary?"

"Rules are all off. She's got back her senses."

"Holy Pike's Peak! You don't mean it!" cried Peace, his face lighting up and losing its worn and haggard look. "She remembers everything, then?"

"Everything. When the gang stole her and took her down the pass in the coach, you'd expect she would 'a' gone crazy entirely. Maybe she was scared 'most to

death. But when they pulled her out, all of them wearing masks, she got the jolt the army surgeon said she might get some time. Started her brain to circulating something handsome-like."

"But tell me all about it. She was their prisoner. She's met Keene up here. She must know if he's the gang's leader. Lord! Why don't you talk?"

"Softly. Her name is Isobel Deland. When you talk with her don't speak of her past life unless she begins it. There's some mighty sore and disagreeable spots in it. Let her take the lead. As to knowing anything about the gang, she was kept hived up in that shack. She didn't see the leader except when he was masked. The cuss seems to have a knack of being with the gang and then disappearing."

"I'll be very careful. My, but it's good to know she's got her senses back! I'll 'fess up, Uncle Dick, that young woman knocked me all in a heap. But before she could remember, it was like sprucing up to a child."

"Go slow," warned Uncle Dick. "Don't bother her with any foolishness. Time enough for that after she gets used to having her brains back in working order. I sha'n't see you again, as I start right away. Don't get too brash and try to follow me before you're fit."

RETURNING to the cook-house, he found Yellow Bear waiting to be fed, and informed:

"My medicine tells me I must ride south instead of north. I don't know how long I shall be gone. While I am away I want my Arapaho brothers to stay here and watch over the medicine-woman. They shall be well paid."

"There is no pay between friends," said Yellow Bear. "No harm shall come to the medicine-woman."

"She was stolen from me once," reminded Uncle Dick.

"She shall not be stolen again."

"I go to find the leader of the men we fought in the cañon."

"Cut-Hand's medicine is very strong. He will count a coup."

The mountaineer overhauled his weapons and ordered a boy to bring a fresh horse from the corral. While waiting for his mount, he was joined by the Quail, who pronounced the magic word—

"Preety."

"Awake, eh?" cried Uncle Dick.

Without a word the Quail turned and shuffled back into the station. Uncle Dick followed her and she opened the door to the girl's room.

Miss Isobel was seated at the open window, a blanket wrapped about her. She stretched out a hand in welcome and motioned him to be seated beside her. He anxiously inquired—

"How's your head now, Miss Isobel?"

"I'm all right. The Quail has tried to tell me about Mr. Peace. How badly is he hurt?"

"One arm mussed up a trifle. Didn't touch the bone. He'll be on his feet in a day or so. Funny thing, but he's been worrying about you."

She colored warmly and evaded.

"And Mr. Keene? He could make me laugh even when I was so worried. He made the Quail angry one day because he talked just like her. It wasn't nice and I told him so, but it was funny."

"Natural-born mimic," muttered Uncle Dick. "Used to take off a half-breed trader, Baptiste, I'm told."

"You say he isn't here?"

"I haven't but I will. Hasn't been round since you——"

"Were stolen," she completed as he halted in confusion. "Don't be afraid of my nerves. They jangled and hurt only when I couldn't remember things. That was because I was afraid of myself, not of anything else."

"Well, Keene has gone. He's gone for good, I'm sure. When I come back I may know more about him. Until we do know more about him, however, it's best not to think of him too much," Uncle Dick warned, feeling very awkward at the task.

"Very little seems to be known about any one out in this country," she soberly remarked. "Even I came here without any memory or history. I was interested in him the same as I was in Mr. Peace, because the Quail said he went out to help find me."

"So he did. So he did," confusedly mumbled Uncle Dick. "He's a curious cuss, begging your pardon."

"He seemed to be several kinds of men in one man," she murmured. Then with a little laugh: "And I couldn't quite tell which was the real man. Sometimes he seemed downright simple. Then again——"

"Then he seemed to be mighty cute and

wise," finished Uncle Dick. "You've hit him off to a T. When he acted simple he wasn't showing his true self, I'll bet a jug. He was a stranger to me till I met him at Muddy Creek. May be a saint or devil, for all I know, but I can count on the fingers of my crippled hand all the saints I ever met out here. The little girl I called Mary June heads the list."

"You'll turn my head again so I won't remember anything," she rallied.

Then thoughtfully—

"But he seemed nice."

Uncle Dick coughed apologetically and warned:

"Never take a stranger on trust out here on Raton Range, Miss Isobel. Treat 'em civil but learn something about their folks and their business before banking too heavy on 'em."

"You took me on trust without knowing anything beyond the fact that I was brought here by two outlaws. You took me on trust after learning my uncle was one of that terrible band."

"I wasn't speaking of children. Joe Peace 'lows he'll be afoot in a day or so and sort of hankers to talk with you. I've told him to follow your lead. You don't have to talk about anything you don't want to."

"I hope he will be able to be about!" she softly cried. "As to talk, there's nothing to tell, except about my uncle. I—I think I won't tell that just yet. Maybe he'll be able to be about tomorrow."

"I'll bet a jug on it! Now, little girl, I'm going to be away for a few days."

"Oh, that's bad news!"

"While I'm gone, a parcel of Arapahoes, the Quail's people, will stick to these diggings. Ugly-looking critters, some of 'em. Given to painting themselves up some promisc'us, but they're friends of mine. If you step outdoors and see a Injun peeking at you from behind a rock or bush, be glad he's there, for he'll be keeping a friendly eye on you."

"I'm sorry you must go. I won't be afraid of the Arapahoes. I'm only afraid of some white men."

"That will be done away with in time," quietly assured Uncle Dick.

The boy brought the horse to the door. Uncle Dick bade the girl good-by, summoned the Mexican and gave him instructions as to feeding the Indians.

"Whisky they have must, they say," said the Mexican, his English fluent but usually reversed.

"If you give 'em any, I'll sculp you. Not a drop."

With this final warning Uncle Dick mounted and rode up the pass.

At the crest of the ridge he halted to gaze at a snow-covered range more than two hundred miles away. Viewed through the marvelous atmosphere, it appeared to be within reach of an afternoon's stroll. Nearer loomed Fisher's Peak, named after one of General Kearney's artillery officers and reminiscent of the Mexican War. Behind him, in the little depression, was his toll-gate and station and Isobel Deland.

"If she don't up and get married I'll adopt her as my daughter," he declared. "If she marries a good chap I'll adopt both of 'em."

And, perhaps for the first time, he rode down toward the southland with his thoughts on a woman, rather than on the enduring monuments of ancient days.

SOON after the discovery of gold in Colorado, some of the plains tribes, notably the Kiowas, had engaged in the lucrative practise of running off immigrants' cattle. When a train was too strong to be attacked, a midnight dash, with the bucks dragging buffalo robes over the ground, was sufficient to stampede any stock not securely corralled. The Kiowas usually did this at a small stream down the trail where the trains were accustomed to camp. "Whoa-Haw" was a word added to the Kiowa vocabulary at this time because of its frequent usage by the bull-whackers in controlling their cattle. When Old Tommy, a withered wisp of anatomy, came from nowhere and opened a general store and saloon at this camping site, it became known as Whoa-Haw. Besides the store and saloon, under one roof, there were five or six small shacks.

Whoa-Haw's only excuse for existing was the thirst of passing freighters and the occasional call for provisions by prospectors. Cimarron was the nearest settled community, and Whoa-Haw's population was largely transient. It resulted that each man observed his own laws. A superficial inquiry was made into violent deaths, but this form was observed more to satisfy the curiosity of Old Tommy and his assistants than to preserve any record of a homicide.

Feuds having their inception up or down the trail, or back in the mountains, were terminated at Whoa-Haw with knife or bullet, and the survivor's story was usually accepted—especially if he displayed a disposition to corroborate his testimony with a gun.

Bandits of the trail never hesitated to stop here for fresh mounts, a feed, or a jug of whisky. Old Tommy often announced that a road-agent's money was not only good over his counter and bar, but that if he depended for a living on the gold of honest men he couldn't make enough to keep a rat from starving. While this was an exaggeration, it served to show that Old Tommy possessed no narrow prejudice against gentlemen of the road. The latter appreciated this attitude and often varied the monotony of bush life and hold-ups with a carouse at the Happy Fortune Bar.

Uncle Dick, after pausing to sprinkle dust over his person and to rub grime over his face, hitched his horse under the store-shed and, with his saddle on his shoulder, stumbled through the darkness toward the saloon. Outside, he halted and surveyed the interior. A dozen men were grouped along the front of the bar, while one man seemed to have the end of the bar to himself.

The bar was made of slabs, with a front of bullet-proof logs, and stood very high. Old Tommy had left his store—connected with the saloon by a door—in charge of his assistants and was now helping his bartender serve drinks. Inside the bar was a low platform which enabled Old Tommy and his men to stand high enough to maneuver the liquor and glasses across the rough boards.

The bartender was a squat, stocky individual with a round head and no neck. Old Tommy resembled a vicious monkey. Their elevated position brought them above the heads of their patrons. To accommodate the travel-worn and intoxicated, there was a continuous bench, or settle, made fast to the wall and extending across the two ends and one side, cut only by the entrance from outdoors. Along this were stretched several men who had succumbed to weariness or drink. Prospectors with dust-filled beards and bags of specimens were there. Others of nondescript occupations were sleeping in grotesque postures. As Uncle Dick gazed, one man rolled to the floor, crawled to his knees and rested his head and chest against the settle and continued his slumbers without awakening.

Observing that the section of the settle next to the door leading into the store was vacant and afforded a general view of the long, low room, Uncle Dick drew back from the window and made his entrance. Those at the front of the bar barely noticed him. Old Tommy and "Shorty," as the bartender was called, appraised him with swift, keen glances. The man at the end of the bar stared at him closely till he saw him drop wearily on the settle and arrange the saddle for a pillow. Curling up his legs so that the top of one dusty boot was within reach of the fingers of his right hand, Uncle Dick drew his hat low over his forehead and scanned the scene while pretending to sleep.

With the exception of a drunken freighter, the company were strangers to him—rough backwash from the hills and the New Mexico mines. He estimated that two-thirds of those present were lawless in thought and action, and that the remaining third was very careless. More than one avaricious glance was cast at him and the other sleepers, but Old Tommy's rule was well understood—no robbery of the person could be perpetrated on the premises.

"What happens outside ain't none of my business," he often declared. "But to take it from 'em in here is cuttin' into my trade. Ye've got the whole of New Mexico an' Colorado to do 'em in, an' if that ain't enough jography for ye, I reckon ye ain't up to yer job. Hands off in the Happy Fortune."

Old Tommy, though apparently a shriveled-up shell of a man, mummified except for his bright little eyes, possessed the courage and venom of a rattlesnake, and behind a brace of long-barreled revolvers he was a formidable opponent. The bartender was scarcely human, apart from the phenomenon of speech, but he was devoted to his employer and dispassionately obeyed orders, even to cutting throats. He also possessed a cunning knack of hurling large knives the length of the room and nailing his target nine times out of ten. There had been occasions when, from his elevated position at the bar, he had completely routed desperadoes intent on wrecking the place, by the terrible expedient of throwing his knives into the throng, sowing death or

fearful wounds with each cast. It was very seldom that a stranger could find any disorder at the Happy Fortune Bar.

And yet, although knowing Old Tommy's characteristic insistence upon ruling his own roost, the mountaineer soon discovered that the proprietor could be obsequious. This trait of deportment was now noticeable in his bearing toward the lone man at the end of the bar. The man's ragged apparel and general disheveled appearance would not prepare one to expect him to be the recipient of any courtesy from the proprietor, and yet Old Tommy neglected spendthrift customers to wait upon him. Had his appearance been more prosperous, Uncle Dick would have classed him as a professional gambler. This because of his round, steadily staring light eyes and the unusual pallor of his thin face.

"'Nother of yer partic'lar, Mr. Free," urged Old Tommy ingratiatingly, shoving forward the bottle.

WITHOUT removing his gaze from the entrance to the store, the man spilled a few drops of the strong liquor in the glass and liberally diluted it with water, using his left hand.

Uncle Dick murmured the name to himself reminiscently; then he remembered. Jack Free, a very bad man, a killer by instinct. He had run a bloody course in Santa Fé until public opinion, backed by a posse, had ousted him. He had created his reputation of being a killer after Uncle Dick retired to the top of the pass. The mountaineer knew of him only through hearing the freighters and traders discuss him at the station.

"He's watching me," decided Uncle Dick. "Suspects every newcomer and ain't sized me up yet. Looking for a man to tote a bullet to him every time the door opens. Don't dare let himself go and get foolish with the drink."

Free continued his study of the mountaineer simply because he was the last man to have entered the saloon from outside. Now, a man wearing a long Mexican blanket and high-peaked, broad-brimmed hat walked unsteadily into the saloon from the store. The implacable gaze of the killer caught the man at the entrance and followed him to the middle of the bar, waited while one shaky hand fumbled at a glass, then dropped him and wandered back to Uncle Dick. Now, however, the gaze was less insistent.

A little diversion was afforded when a hillman slid from the settle and, with a miracle of balancing, managed to keep his drunken feet while he picked up a bag of specimens. Lifting the bag to his shoulder, he made for the bar with wide, rangy steps. Another drink was his objective, although from his gait it was obvious he had had too much already. He fell rather than walked the last five feet, and only saved himself from measuring his length by catching the edge of the high bar. The momentum of his approach spun him sidewise and sent him reeling against Free. With a catlike hiss Free made a lightning movement that hurled the awkward one aside and, before the man fell to the floor in an inert heap, Free had him covered with a gun.

The tableau in which the killer was bending forward, his nervous finger on the trigger, the miner on the floor gaping stupidly at the rough ceiling, his bag of specimens scattered in all directions, lasted for several moments while the spectators waited for Free to shoot. Then, with a legerdemain that was startling, the desperado's gun vanished from view and he resumed his former attitude without speaking a word.

Old Tommy, relieved that an indoor tragedy had been averted, advanced the bottle and humbly invited—

"Have jest 'nother tech of that trouble on me, Mr. Free."

Free waved the invitation aside and glared around the room, his round eyes as opaque and expressionless as two marbles. Those who were initiated into the external signs of Free's working up of a homicidal rage became absorbed in their liquor, fearing to catch his eye and attract his attention. Those nearest the exits surreptitiously estimated the time it would take to plunge from range of his deadly guns. Even Old Tommy shivered, for he had read the signs before. Free was approaching the point when only bloodshed would satisfy him. Shorty, searching for an excuse to get hold of one of his favorite knives, began carving a roast of meat, his round head occasionally turning in Free's direction, as if revolving in a ball-and-socket joint. He carved very thin slices very slowly so as to make his pretense last.

Gradually even those not knowing the killer's ways felt that a storm was brewing.

There seemed to be a sinister quality in the atmosphere which hinted at spilled blood. More than one envied the miner, lying flat on his back where he had been hurled, who was now snoring loudly. None dared brave the tempest by attempting to withdraw.

There was nothing psychologically subtle in the cause for Free's rage. He wanted to drink but, although confronted with an inexhaustible supply, he dared not imbibe. His tattered dress and uncouth appearance bespoke a long journey through lonesome places, and he had hailed the Happy Fortune as an oasis.

Then instinct had insisted that he keep sober, though every nerve urged him to get drunk. It was true he could shoot unerringly when half-drunk, or as long as he could see, but the Santa Fé experience, repeated on a minor scale at Las Vegas, had warned him that his drunken, indiscriminate killings were becoming tabu, that he must practise more economy in victims. It was this suspicion of himself, animal-like in that it did not rise above instinct and was but vaguely understood even by the killer himself, that was feeding the fires of his sullen rage.

From beneath his hatbrim the mountaineer watched him and interpreted the deadly menace in the round eyes. The street door opened and a newcomer instantly attracted the killer's attention. Uncle Dick, simulating sleep, heard the door open and close, but dared not move his head. He kept his eyes on Free and was surprized to see the malignant eyes lose some of their venom. Free appeared to be almost pleased to behold the newcomer. Old Tommy's warped face wore a smile of greeting as the stranger advanced down the bar. Shorty gave him a glance; then revolved his head toward Free and laid aside his knife. By some telepathy the drinkers understood the climax had been postponed and all relaxed.

As the stranger crossed Uncle Dick's line of vision he appeared much like any wayfarer. He was travel-stained and wore a dark scarf round his neck, which, with the slouch hat pulled low over his eyes, blocked even a view of his profile. Without any hesitation he made for the end of the bar and halted at the corner, his back to Uncle Dick. Instead of resenting this intrusion, which cramped him for room should he fancy to indulge in gun-play, Free moved toward the wall a step, filled two glasses and eagerly drained his own.

"Feels safe to guzzle it down now," inwardly commented Uncle Dick.

Voices were loudly raised at the bar. Those near Free and the stranger unostentatiously moved away a few paces, leaving the two quite alone. Free's lips curled slightly in welcome and he nodded as the other made some remark from the corner of his mouth. For several minutes the two talked with fluttering lips. Free motioned for the bottle and refilled the glasses—no few, meager drops now.

Then Uncle Dick noticed something which was lost on the other patrons. Before setting down his glass, Free sent one stabbing glance around the room. Then he placed the glass on the bar, as if impelled by something the stranger had said. The latter pushed the bottle back, after examining it briefly, and motioned for another. As Old Tommy hastened to serve him, the man said something, and the proprietor's wrinkled visage grew blank and then showed reluctance. Although he could see only the man's back, Uncle Dick knew he was urging something on Old Tommy. The other was holding back. Then Free, without looking at him, said something, and the withered countenance hardened, the deep-set little bird's eyes glittered, and he dropped his head in assent.

"I'd like to know what that tall galoot whispered to him," mused Uncle Dick. "Something's going to be pulled off here that the crowd ain't expecting."

OLD TOMMY now left the pair alone, but in passing Shorty he murmured something that may have been connected with the bartender's abrupt cessation from wiping glasses. Picking up a heavy knife, he began slowly carving the meat, although one would have said the supply already exceeded the demand.

The two at the end of the bar drank from the new bottle, and again Free sent his catlike gaze sweeping the room.

"—— it! What's up?" Uncle Dick murmured. "Something is going to happen." Free's eyes dropped back on the empty glass, and in that moment Uncle Dick's fingers were advanced till they rested on top of his boot-leg.

The killer toyed with his glass as if weighing some problem. His companion stared

straight ahead at the wall behind the bar. After a bit of this indifference, the stranger walked to the window behind his companion and stood with his back to the room, looking out into the night.

As if reaching an important decision, Free gave a jerk of his shoulders and moved from the bar, his gaze fixed on the miner snoring in the middle of the floor. The drinkers followed him with furtive glances, all their former apprehensions returning. As Free shifted his dull eyes and stared toward the bar, every head went right-about, and all became voluble over trivial things.

Again Free studied the sleeping miner, pausing to turn over some of the specimens with the toe of his rough boot, all the time swinging his head slowly from side to side as if guarding against interference, but never once, Uncle Dick noticed, did he seem to be concerned at what might happen behind him. The stranger, however, remained at the window—an excellent mirror for one wishing to keep tabs on the scene—his thumbs in his belt.

Puzzled and wondering why the killer made no overt move, Uncle Dick watched through half-closed lids. Free continued staring at the specimens and at the sleeping man, stepping slowly away from him until he was well down the line. As the men at the bar felt his presence behind them, their bodies registered the effect with little convulsive movements. In the wooden face of Shorty, now carving more briskly as if his task were nearly done, there was no revelation of the impending dénouement.

Free's right hand now twitched slightly. He was standing in the middle of the room, opposite the store entrance, his profile to Uncle Dick. The mountaineer's fingers curved round the butt of the revolver in the top of his boot. Without any preliminary move to betray his purpose, Free spun about on his heel, his revolver appearing as if by magic and spitting a shot, just as Uncle Dick jerked the saddle in front of him.

The killer's bullet thudded into the saddle, and at the same moment the gun leaping from Uncle Dick's boot fired once. Free dropped his weapon and straightened his full height, as if striving to stand on tiptoe, then crashed to the floor, face down.

A dead silence greeted this stupendous miracle of Jack Free's death. Then the man at the window shouted:

"Shoot him down! He's one of Gentleman Ralph's gang!"

Shorty's thick arm went back, holding the heavy knife by the tip, and then fell to his side as a bullet from one of the drinkers' guns smacked into his low forehead. The man at the window yelled something inarticulate and, crouching low, threw up his gun. Uncle Dick fired, smashed the window behind him and felt a second bullet strike the saddle. By this time the men at the bar had dragged forth their weapons and were turning on Uncle Dick. Before a shot could be fired, some one, an excellent marksman, extinguished the two smoky lamps with as many shots.

As Uncle Dick darted through the store entrance, still clinging to his saddle, he was followed by a string of bullets. Two men sprang forward to stop his flight, but the sight of his gun caused them to duck for cover. He shot out the lamps in the store as a mob of shouting men poured through from the saloon, but as there was now no light, the mountaineer, as he glided through the door into the night, heard the sound of heavy bodies violently colliding.

Running to the shed back of the store, he found his horse and hurriedly threw on the saddle. He could hear some one at the other end of the shed similarly engaged, but the darkness made any observations impossible. Groans and cries still sounded in the Happy Fortune, but, as Uncle Dick tightened the last strap, he suddenly discovered he could make out surrounding objects. As he was wondering at this phenomenon, the horseman up the line tore by him, his horse kicking and plunging as the strange rosy glow began to spread across the night. The rider, cursing and spurring his beast, took time to lean from his saddle and fire point-blank at the mountaineer. Only the gyrations of the assassin's frantic mount caused the bullet to go wild.

With a yell of rage at the murderous attempt on his life, Uncle Dick drew his gun and began firing, as the horseman turned the corner of the shed. Then mounting, he gave chase, firing rapidly.

He could not see his man and rode by the sound of the clicking hoofs. After several bullets had swished close to his head, he dismounted. He suddenly realized that he furnished an excellent target as he stood between the fugitive and the light behind

him. A glance over his shoulder and the light was explained.

The windows of the Happy Fortune saloon glowed red, and smoke curled from the eaves. Smoke was also creeping along the roof of the store. Some one had attempted to relight a lamp and had set fire to some of the spilled liquor, and Old Tommy was about to lose his tinder-like set of buildings.

Pausing only to reload his guns, Uncle Dick climbed back into the saddle and spurred south.

"I'll get him if I have to tag him to —— and gone," he furiously vowed. Then regretfully: "But Joe won't get any word from me at the Happy Fortune bar. Maybe the ruins will be word enough."

A flash in the darkness ahead, and he ceased his meditations. On they rode, firing at the sound of each other's horse. Behind them Old Tommy's buildings burst forth into a beautiful crimson flower blooming high against the heavens. Uncle Dick reined in and listened. The *click-clack* of the fugitive's animal no longer guided him.

TO BE CONCLUDED

Author of "The Skull of Shirzad Mir," "The Prophecy of the Blind," etc.

Where is the man who knows what is hidden in the heart of a woman?

—Mohammedan proverb.

MY MASTER and Jani Beg, the Uzbek, had been at drawn swords. Jani Beg had built a tower of the skulls of my master's retainers that he had slain. On the other hand, Shirzad Mir, who was my master, had taken prisoner the son of Jani Beg, who was called Said Afzel, the dreamer and eater of opium and *bhang*.

Verily, it is written that the clashing of bright swords delights the soul of a brave man. Yet in this year—early in the seventeenth century of the Christian calendar—Jani Beg put aside the sword. He took up another weapon. He called upon Krishna Taya, a girl of the Rajputs.

This was because we, the hillmen of Badakshan, led by Shirzad Mir and the English merchant, Sir Weyand, had taken the citadel of Badakshan. It was by a trick, but nevertheless we sat securely behind the high stone walls of Khanjut and ate of the stores Jani Beg had gathered there for himself, and we were content. He could not take Khanjut by storm. No man has done that since the citadel was built under the white peaks of Kohi-Baba at the mouth of the pass that leads to Hindustan.

So Jani Beg, who was a man of guile, thought that he, also, would play a trick. And for this he chose Krishna Taya. He whispered an evil thing in the tiny ear of the girl, and she listened. Since the memory of our fathers, woman has played the

part of treachery and her beauty has made blind the eyes of warriors.

Aye, it is so. I, Abdul Dost, the *mansabdar*, have seen it. And I watched the coming of Krishna Taya and harkened to her soft words, which were as artless as those of a child. Too late I saw what was in her heart.

She was the one Sir Weyand named "Rose Face." She was no taller than the armpit of my mail shirt and no bigger around than two small shields joined together. She was not a common courtesan, for she was of the Rajputs, who hold honor higher than life. Nevertheless, what is written is true—the face of a fair woman holds a spell.

I saw it all. It could not have happened had we and our men not been idle in Khanjut after many labors. We had starved and grown lean in the hills. Now we ate and slept. At such a time a warrior grows sluggish and his wits become dull and the sight of a shapely woman is not unwelcome.

This is the tale. There be few to tell it, for many in Khanjut died quickly and went to paradise or to the devil, after the coming of Krishna Taya.

The days had became still and the warmth of the sun tranquil, as Autumn spread its arms over the hills of Badakshan. The sheep from the hills were pasturing in the valley as Jani Beg, in his camp at Balkh, sought out the tent of Krishna Taya. I was not there to see, but much I heard from one of the eunuchs of Said Afzel, and more came to my ears from a woman of the Uzbek harem.

Krishna Taya was no better than a slave. Said Afzel had seen her when he was with the Mogul, and Jahangir, the Mogul, had her carried off to please the prince, since Said Afzel's father was Jani Beg who commanded twelve thousand swords and twice that number of horses.

She was playing with pigeons in a pear garden when they took her. She had come from the Rajputs. There she had been a free woman and high born, yet Jahangir was Mogul of India, lord of the Deccan, Kashmir and Sind. She was given as slave to Said Afzel, who was well pleased, for she was fair of face and body. Many thought—so said the eunuch—that Krishna Taya would slay herself, being of the Rajputs, where no women may be slaves.

Whether it was because she was a child, or for another reason, I know not, but Krishna Taya did not thrust a dagger into her throat. She became the property of Said Afzel and said little, waxing thinner of face as dark circles came under her calf-like eyes.

Said Afzel tired of her swiftly. Those who eat much opium are not firm of purpose. He left her in the tents of the Uzbek harem, where she was dressed in the white silk trousers and cap of cloth-of-silver that the Uzbek women wear. Said Afzel's eunuchs kept her from meeting with the Rajputs who sometimes came from the camp of Jahangir, fearing that they might do her harm. By the law of the Marwar, no high-born woman may be a slave to an enemy.

Krishna Taya had broken this law She had not done as her ancestors, who dressed in their bridal clothes and followed the queen of the Rajputs into the funeral flames when Chitore fell to the enemy.

Yet—so the eunuch whispered—she was but a child and might well fear the cold touch of death. Likewise, she ate opium, which kept her quiet and wrought upon her fancies. She had been partaking of it when Jani Beg visited her.

He sat on the carpet by her and talked. He was a shrewd man and her brain was aflame with the drug.

"The *ferang* is the shield on the arm of Shirzad Mir," he said. "He is like to a devil loosed from the Christian purgatory. Without him, Shirzad Mir would fare ill at our hands. He it was who took my son prisoner."

She lifted up her soft eyes at this and plucked at the cap which she wore instead of the veil of her people.

"Yet he is his own man," continued Jani Beg. "He serves himself. None other. What reward he seeks I know not, save that he has sworn to obtain certain trade concessions from the great Mogul. Jahangir will not see him so long as he fights with the rebels of Shirzad Mir."

Aye, Jani Beg, who was an Uzbek of low birth, dared to name Shirzad Mir, whose father and father's father ruled in Badakshan, a rebel.

"Mayhap," whispered Jani Beg, "Sir Weyand does not know that I am allied to the Mogul. If he knew this—" Jani Beg smiled—"I might forget certain wrongs

he has done me. Aye, and Jahangir might also forget, for the Mogul has counted the swords I lead. Say this to the *ferang*——"

"How?" asked Krishna Taya softly.

The woman of the harem was listening behind the hangings of the tent and heard what passed.

"It is in my mind," said Jani Beg, stroking his long beard, "to send a present to this *ferang* dog. He is a merchant, and when did a merchant mislike the sight of gold? I will send a Persian sword with gold hilt, certain rubies and woven cloth-of-gold. I will send—" he touched the long hair of the girl and Krishna Taya's cheeks grew red— "you."

The girl was silent, being afraid to speak.

"The *ferang*," went on Jani Beg, "has a heart for fighting. But now there is a truce. I have willed it so. The men of Shirzad Mir think I am weak." He laughed and closed his hand on the girl's arm so her fingers became numb. "As for you, be not so blind. I am master of Badakshan, a frontier of the Mogul. I can ask and receive much, and I seek much." He broke off to finger his beard again. "Win me the *ferang;* aye, win me Sir Weyand. I reward those who serve me."

He unwound a long string of small pearls from his turban, where he had placed it in imitation of the Mogul fashion. This he laid about her throat and peered at her curiously.

"Can my words aid you, my lord?" she said, feeling the pearls with a trembling hand.

"Aye," smiled Jani Beg. "Put this thought in his head and you will serve me well."

"How?"

His brows knit together in a swift frown. He plucked forth his dagger and, so quickly that she had no time to draw back, passed the blade before both her eyelids, which fluttered in alarm. So near came the blade that it touched the skin. So said the woman who saw.

"Are you a *begum*—a wife of a noble—to question my words? So! Tell me in one word. Will you do this thing faithfully? If not—" His glance strayed to the dagger.

Perhaps he would have liked to slay her, for the blood lust was strong in him. I have seen Said Afzel, who was his son, wring the neck of a white pigeon in order to feel the life quiver out through his fingers. Nevertheless, Jani Beg was an excellent soldier and full of guile.

He had stirred the girl.

"Aye," she cried, looking wide-eyed at the dagger, "I will sever the prop from him who seeks the throne of Badakshan!"

"It is well," he said indifferently and rose. "Say what I have told you."

He lowered his voice, so the woman behind the curtain did not hear. Presently he laughed in his beard.

"So, Krishna Taya! Soon six men will stand alone together but, before they part, they shall be four and two."

This is what they said in the tent of Krishna Taya that night. I did not hear of it until long after—until what Jani Beg had promised had come to pass and ten thousand Uzbeks were storming the walls of Khanjut.

II

IT WAS a late watch in the afternoon and I was drowsy, for the sun was warm on the stones of Khanjut and no wind stirred in the dried leaves of the poplar trees that fringed the garden of the castle.

Past the corner where I sat on my heels one of the hillmen bore a jar. He had come from the cellars of the castle and I suspected there was wine in the jar, so I rose and followed silently.

Truly, I was a follower of the prophet, but my thirst was great. Where there was wine, I knew there would be drinking. I dogged the hillman past the battlements to the center garden. He went down some steps and I did likewise.

I came full upon my lord, Shirzad Mir and the Englishman, lying on some pleasant carpets under the trees. The bearer was just setting down the jar between them. Said Afzel was near-by, lying at full length.

"Ho, Abdul Dost!" cried Shirzad Mir, who had a quick eye. "You have come like a dog at the smell of meat in the pot. Nay, do not leave us. Come, here is another bowl. Said Afzel will not need his. He is rightly named the dreamer; he has taken opium until he is like a full-fed snake."

I looked at the Uzbek. His head was slack on the carpet, crushing the white

heron plume on the turban. His olive face was red and he breathed heavily, while his slant eyes were glazed. They looked at me but seemed to see not. Truly they were like those of a snake. A snake that smelled of musk and attar of rose.

"Peace be unto you, my lord!" I greeted Shirzad Mir, and sat. "I do not seek the wine."

"A lie!" cried Sir Weyand jovially, shaking his yellow head. "Come, let me fill your bowl, Abdul Dost."

But I would not, as it would put me in the wrong. Then there came a soldier from the gate.

"A message comes for the lord *ferang*," he said, after his *salaam*. We saw coming toward us under the trees a fat eunuch leading a slim girl by the wrist, and after them a white horse of excellent breed. The saddle cloths were silk and there were jewels in the peak of the saddle. A simitar with gold hilt and some rich stuffs were on the saddle. I stared and Sir Weyand sat up and looked at this curiously.

The eunuch dropped to his knees and made the triple *salaam*, beating his head against the ground. The girl, who was veiled, fell also to her knees.

"What means this?" asked Shirzad Mir in surprize.

"It is a small, a very small gift from the treasury of Jani Beg, O lord of Badakshan and descendant of illustrious ancestors, O most munificent Shirzad Mohammed el Baber Hazret Mir," whined the eunuch.

"Ho!" muttered my master, who was not slow of wit. "Jani Beg sends me a horse and sword that I may mount and fight him. Then I will send back a silk rug of Persia and a spindle, for he seems more inclined to sit in a corner than to fight——"

"Thrice blessed, pardon!" the eunuch chattered. "The gift is for the *ferang*. It is for the illustrious stranger in our country. Jani Beg does not wish to be thought an ungenerous foe."

"For me!" Sir Weyand looked from the eunuch to the girl and then to the horse.

"Aye, may it be pleasant in the sight of your nobleness! Truly, the woman is of the Rajputs and surpassingly fair. I have guarded her with zeal. There is not a blemish on her——"

"Please!"

Sir Weyand's cheeks became red. Shirzad Mir began to laugh.

"Jani Beg honors you with a wife," he chuckled. "Now that you have taken Khanjut, he sends you a slave."

I did not laugh, considering what this might mean. The eunuch plucked the veil from the woman's face, enough to show her beauty.

"It is a slave," he boasted. "And such a slave. I will take good care of her for my lord the *ferang*. I like not the service of Jani Beg."

He caught sight of Said Afzel and gasped. The poet's heavy eyes had turned slowly to the girl and he was twisting his thin black beard. The miserable guardian of the harem quivered in fright like a fish caught between two nets.

But Sir Weyand looked long into the dark eyes that sought his and fell silent.

"She is not ill to look upon," commented Shirzad Mir gravely. "Jani Beg is unusually thoughtful. I would have said this woman was chosen by Said Afzel, if we had him not prisoner for the last moon.

"A royal gift to one who deserves it, lord," whined the eunuch, who thought this, at least, was safe to say.

"And are you also a royal present?" demanded my master quickly.

"Nay," the fat one *salaamed*. "I am but dirt from a dunghill."

"Do we deserve dirt?"

"Nay," the unhappy man wriggled, fearing that his death was near, but voluble after his kind. "I meant that I was but a servant who had come to a garden of paradise from a swine-pen."

"From the Uzbeks?" The merry eyes of Shirzad Mir twinkled.

The eunuch lifted his head long enough to see that Said Afzel was listening.

"Have mercy, lord! What was in my mind was that your presence has made me blessed, like one who comes from darkness to light. Now that I know the gift of the illustrious Jani Beg has been well received——"

"Enough!"

Shirzad Mir frowned. He whispered to Sir Weyand that a eunuch was a breeder of trouble.

"Get to your feet, O dunghill-that-came-to-the-garden-of-paradise! Abdul Dost, go to the battlements and take up the first bow that comes to hand. This dog may now begin to run out of the gate. Bring

him down with an arrow, if you can, from the wall. If not, he goes free."

He waved his hand and the fat man galloped off like a frightened elephant. I, also, made speed to the wall. I would have been well content to plant a shaft in his haunches.

But when I gained the battlement he was far below me. He had rolled from the winding road down the slope of the cliff. His bones must have been well shaken; still, he saved his life.

So it happened that when I reached the spot under the trees again, all were gone but the soldier, who was taking a drink from the jar. I upbraided him well, for I had remembered the jar and was still thirsty.

He said the girl had fallen to weeping and Sir Weyand had softened to her tears when she cried that it would be her death to send her back to Jani Beg.

The *ferang* had offered her a room in his residence. The horse and sword he had presented to Shirzad Mir who had taken them readily, saying that he would ride the one and cut off Jani Beg's head with the other.

But I was not content, knowing it was not wonted that a woman of the Rajputs should consent to be a slave.

I dismissed the man. There was still some wine in the jar and no one was looking.

SO THE girl of the Rajputs came to Khanjut.

But I knew that any gift from Jani Beg was not meant for our happiness. I sent the soldier who had drunk from my jar of wine—Bihor Jan, a long-legged Afghan with nimble wits and a quick ear—to Sir Weyand to serve as a guard for the woman. Thus Bihor Jan would tell me what she did.

A day passed and then another. Then I sought out Bihor Jan, who was squatting on the stone of the entrance hall of the castle. I asked him what had passed between the woman and Sir Weyand.

"Eh!" The Afghan spat and looked about him. "The *ferang* has seen her but once. It was when she carried his curry and wine from the kitchen to his room."

"What did Sir Weyand?"

"The *ferang?* What you or I would have done, Abdul Dost. He ate of the food."

"And the woman?"

"She said in a soft voice, so I could scarce hear, although the door was open, that she was his slave. She asked why he turned his face from her service."

"What said he?"

"He became red and said that in his country they had no slaves. He did not wish her to wait upon him."

That was well, so far. But before long the Afghan came to my room—an alcove opening from that of Shirzad Mir—and greeted me. I saw from his dark face that he had news on his stomach and invited him to kneel and eat, as I was doing.

This he did readily, scooping up in his dirty fingers some choice sugared fruit that I had selected for myself.

"This day," he grunted between mouthfuls, "Krishna Taya seated herself by the embrasure of the *ferang's* room and waited for his arrival. When he came she *salaamed* and cried that her heart was troubled with loneliness."

He took up the bowl of jelly for which I had been about to reach. Now that it was too late, I pretended that I did not want the jelly.

"She was lonely with desire for her own country. She asked the *ferang* if he would help her to get back to Rajputana. Then he questioned her concerning the Rajputs and their alliance with the Mogul. I could not hear what they said after that, though I sat with my back to the door. But the name of Jani Beg was spoken."

From this time forth I sometimes saw Sir Weyand walking about the garden with the woman. They talked much, for she was trying to teach him the language of the Rajputs and he was anxious to learn.

How is a man to scent danger in the perfume of a woman's robes or the quick glance of dark eyes?

Once, when they had been sitting under the bare pomegranates, I watched her walk back to the castle. She carried herself proudly, for all she was a slave.

"Eh, Sir Weyand," I said curiously, "she is fair. Jani Beg sent you a princely gift."

"Nay, I know not what to do with her, Abdul Dost," he said quickly. "Jani Beg will not take her back, nor will her own people, now that she is under the cloud of dishonor."

"Why not sell her? It would not be hard to find a buyer."

"That I will not do—unless it should be her will."

Truly, the *ferang* had a strange nature. The woman embarrassed him; he would not let her serve him and wait on him; yet he would not take a round sum for her or even sell the fine necklace she wore.

Then I saw he was frowning, looking out under the trees. I also looked and noted that the Uzbek prince had stopped her. Said Afzel was leaning close and whispering, fingering the pearls at her throat, for he knew not we watched.

She listened to what the Uzbek said, but when the poet laid hand on her arm she freed herself and ran off into the building.

"Once," I whispered, wishing to test the *ferang*, "Said Afzel owned Krishna Taya. He it was who took her for a slave against the law of her people. Perhaps she loves Said Afzel."

He looked at me keenly.

"Think you so, Abdul Dost?"

"Aye," I lied; "why else did she not slay herself, as is the custom of her people after an injury that they can not avenge."

He fell silent, but the look he cast after the languid figure of the Uzbek was not friendly. I thought of the verses in the Koran which say that fire, once kindled, is put out with difficulty. Why had the *ferang* named the girl Rose Face if his heart had not warmed to her?

For the moment all thought of the girl was driven from my mind. Bihor Jan approached and said that Shirzad Mir demanded my presence.

A rider had been sighted in the plain before the citadel. He had made signs to our outposts that he was on a mission of peace and would speak with those in Khanjut.

It was Shirzad Mir's order that I should mount and ride to meet this man. I donned a clean tunic over my mail and wrapped a white turban about my head. I chose a good sword and a sightly horse.

While the others watched from the wall I passed down the cliff road, over the drawbridge and neared the rider. Then I saw that it was Raja Man Singh, one of the highest ameers of the Mogul court and general to Jahangir himself, also leader of the Rajputs.

He was very elegantly dressed, with a jewelled sword stuck through his girdle and a single large diamond on the front of his turban. He rode excellently well and seemed quite fearless. He had a neatly combed black beard divided on each side of his chin, and his glance was that of a man of many followers.

Raja Man Singh greeted me in soft Persian, somewhat contemptuously. I did not dismount, despite his high rank, for I considered myself the emissary of Shirzad Mir. Besides, I was the older man.

I lifted my hand to my forehead and bent my head very slightly. I waited for him to speak my own tongue, as I knew not Persian. This he presently did.

"Have you learned manners among the dogs, soldier," he cried harshly, "that you know not the courtesy due an ameer of the Mogul?"

"Nay, Raja Man Singh," I made response, "I was bred in the camp of the great Mogul Akbar, on whom be peace. There I also was given rank—on the battlefield."

His horse was moving restlessly, but he did not sit the less straight for this. He was a splendid horseman and a soldier among many. It surprized me that he had come alone to Khanjut. Later, however, the thought came to me that he was but just arrived from Jahangir's army and sought to look upon the strength of the fortress.

"The greater shame to be a rebel now!" he cried with all the intolerance of his race.

"Nay," I said again, "Shirzad Mir has been faithful to the Moguls before the barbarian Uzbeks set foot in Badakshan."

He merely grunted, fingering his beard disdainfully.

"Take me then to Shirzad Mir," he ordered, "since I come on a mission of truce."

"Shirzad Mir bade me bring the message to him, not the messenger."

"Dog!" he gritted his white teeth. "Am I one to exchange words with such as you? Tell your master that Jani Beg would speak with him. The Uzbek ameer will ride to this spot when the sun is at noon. He and I will be alone. Let Shirzad Mir come hither with one man—no more. We seek a parley, not war—at present. Let him come or not, as suits him. I care not."

Wheeling his mount, the Rajput spurred away, raising a cloud of dust. He was a fearless man, although merciless.

III

IT IS the wisdom of God that no man can know the fate in store for him. It was our fate that we should not see the black cloud of peril rising over Khanjut, or the toils of the snare that closed about Shirzad Mir.

My men gambled and ate and were happy thinking of insulting things to say to the Uzbek patrols that sometimes neared our walls. And I, also, would have been happy, but for Krishna Taya.

I could not linger, yet I whispered a word of caution to Bihor Jan as I rode off with Shirzad Mir to meet with our foes.

If the Rajput had not been with Jani Beg, we would not have gone. But the Rajput was a man of his word, as was Shirzad Mir.

I was proud of my lord as he cantered to meet the other two. Jani Beg, who was there first, thought to impose a hardship on my lord by dismounting and sitting upon his cloak. Thus he hoped to make Shirzad Mir approach him on foot as an inferior in rank. Raja Man Singh, impatient of such pettishness, kept to his horse.

But my master saw through the artifice. He cantered straight up to the sitting Uzbek and he did not dismount. He reined in his horse only when its hoofs were fair upon the silk cloak of Jani Beg. In spite of himself the Uzbek drew back and scowled.

I turned my head to hide a smile and I saw the Rajput's beard twitch. He and Shirzad Mir greeted each other briefly. Jani Beg was made to look ridiculous, squatting beneath our horses' legs, so he rose and mounted, and I saw the pulse in his forehead beating. I, being inferior in rank, made the *salaam* from the saddle, which is not customary, yet I followed the example of Shirzad Mir and he cast me an approving glance.

"We have come, Shirzad Mir," said Raja Man Singh, "to arrange certain terms between the Uzbeks and the rebels. Jani Beg desires to treat for the ransom of his son."

The Uzbek chieftain looked darkly at the general of the Mogul. He would have liked better to play with words, but the Rajput was impatient.

"We—" Jani Beg waved his lean hand toward the Rajput— "will offer you a continuation of the truce you desire if you will release Said Afzel and his personal followers."

Again Shirzad Mir smiled.

"Is the truce of our seeking, Jani Beg? Nay, you have chosen it. For my part, I shall not rest from fighting until Badakshan is free from invaders."

"Then you will continue to rebel against the Mogul?"

"Nay. Badakshan is part of the Mogul empire. I fight only with Uzbeks."

"Yet I and my men are serving the Mogul. And you see Raja Man Singh."

Shirzad Mir did not smile this time.

"Let the Rajput give heed to this," he said slowly. "Lies have been spoken against me in court, and I have taken up the sword of vengeance against the author of those lies. My quarrel is not with the Mogul. When the fighting is ended, he shall receive my allegiance."

They were bold words, spoken by an outlawed chieftain with only a handful of hillmen opposed to the Uzbek army, which possessed powder and artillery and was strengthened by a force of the invincible Rajput cavalry. I held my head high with pride and listened keenly. Jani Beg began to speak words of another color.

"You have an ally, Shirzad Mir," he observed shrewdly, "a *ferang*. You owe him much. Tell him, as ransom for my son, I will procure his pardon from Jahangir, who is at Kahbul, and also an audience with Jahangir. Thus he may obtain the trade rights he seeks for England."

Truly, the guile of the Uzbek was great. If Shirzad Mir should refuse this offer, it must offend Sir Weyand. Should my master keep the offer secret from the *ferang*, Jani Beg would find means of getting the news to the Englishman's ears. Yet both Shirzad Mir and I knew that it would not do to give up Said Afzel for a promise of Jani Beg.

Shirzad Mir fingered his beard thoughtfully. Then he turned to the elegant figure of the Rajput.

"Do you also pledge your word, Raja Man Singh," he asked courteously, "that this privilege will be granted the *ferang* and that he will not be harmed?"

Jani Beg had spoken cleverly. He knew that we could ill afford to lose the services of Sir Weyand, but the Rajput cherished the righteousness of his spoken pledge as a woman guards her honor.

"Nay," he cried, "this is not my affair. I have no authority to give a promise for Jahangir. Settle the matter between yourselves."

I pricked up ears at that, for it sounded as if the Rajput were not over fond of the Uzbek. Jani Beg had hinted that the two were as brothers. The Uzbek frowned slightly; then his brow cleared. He smiled with thick lips.

"I will give up Balkh as ransom for my son."

When he said that, I saw the Rajput's brows twitch in involuntary surprize. The thought came to me that Jani Beg was offering more than he intended to pay. Shirzad Mir was not one to be caught by such a trap.

"Nay," he said pleasantly. "Does a falcon give up its perch to strut on the ground where are many wolves? Keep Balkh—if you can."

By now Raja Man Singh was waxing restless. His handsome face was petulant.

"Shiva—and Shiva!" he cried. "Name the rebel a price, Jani Beg. I am thirsty. Give him a camel-load of gold!"

He lifted some grains of brown powder from a jeweled box that hung at his throat and placed them on his tongue. Jani Beg thought swiftly. He had no wish to exasperate the Rajput.

"Two lacs of rupees and twenty horses of Arabia—" he began, when Shirzad Mir broke in.

"We have no need of such." He turned to the Rajput. "Give me twelve donkeys heavily loaded with powder and two others bearing camel swivels, also twenty-four good matchlocks and as many braces of Turkish pistols, and you shall have Said Afzel."

The Rajput seemed to be about to refuse. Powder and cannon—even such small pieces of brass—were beyond price in Badakshan, and I judge that the swivels belonged to Raja Man Singh himself. Sir Weyand had said that there were many in the Mogul's army, although the Uzbeks had them not.

But Jani Beg cast him a glance.

"It is well," the Uzbek said swiftly. "Two days we must have to make ready the things. We will then bring them to this place when the sun is at the same hour."

"The beasts of burden must be driven by a half-dozen unarmed men on foot," bargained Shirzad Mir.

"Aye. And Said Afzel must be unharmed."

"Not a scratch will be on his skin. He shall be whole, although probably drunk, as is his custom."

So it was agreed. Jani Beg's party, including the beasts with the ransom, would ride to this spot in the plain. We would come forth to meet them. Then, while we still held Said Afzel and any who came to attend him, the men who drove the beasts would retire to the Uzbek lines. Then we would join Jani Beg's party and deliver the prisoner and they would ride away, leaving us the animals with their valuable burden.

"I will come alone with Raja Man Singh," added Jani Beg. "And you will bring only Sir Weyand."

Shirzad Mir was surprized and hesitated. I was angered that I should not accompany my lord, as was my hereditary right, but Jani Beg said smoothly that both he and the Rajput desired to look upon the *ferang*, and Shirzad Mir assented, saying only that in case Said Afzel was drunk I should be allowed to escort his litter down to the meeting-place and should remain ten spear-lengths distant. He asked this because it was my right by custom.

"Likewise—" and he looked at the Rajput, not at Jani Beg— "this thing shall be done in peace and the curse of God be on the man who sets hand to sword. I pledge this for myself and those with me."

Then I noted that Jani Beg spoke swiftly before the Rajput.

"Aye, we trust you, Shirzad Mir."

Whereupon both wheeled their horses and made off. Not however, before I saw a gleam of satisfaction on the Uzbek's hawk-like face. For some secret reason he was well pleased with the bargain. The thought came to me that he was using the Rajput's honor as a shield and that Shirzad Mir had got too readily what he asked.

Jani Beg glanced back shrewdly over his shoulder as he rode, but the Rajput, who was a fearless man, looked neither to right nor left. In spite of my foreboding, my heart swelled at the thought of possessing the powder and the brass cannon.

"Eh, Abdul Dost," cried my lord, "we have strengthened mighty Khanjut at the price of an opium-guzzling animal."

And think as I would, the bargain seemed

safe to me, notwithstanding my distrust of Jani Beg. Sir Weyand and my lord would be alone with Jani Beg and the Rajput. If swords should, by chance, be drawn the odds would be even and I should not be far distant. Men have said I am an excellent hand with the scimitar. Likewise, there was the honor of Raja Man Singh, who would not draw the first sword, although in a quarrel he would be forced to side with Jani Beg. As for Said Afzel, he could not lift a weapon.

A CHANGE had come upon Sir Weyand. He fell moody and he seemed to avoid Shirzad Mir and me. Bihor Jan reported that he talked long and quietly with Krishna Taya and at other times walked by himself on the ramparts.

This was not wonted, for, when himself, the *ferang* was a merry man, although not fond of words. Once I asked him if the devil of illness had gripped him.

"I know not what devil it is, Abdul Dost," he made reply. "There is a matter lies heavily on my mind. It is not always easy to settle what is right and what is wrong."

He spoke with seeming frankness, yet the words had a strange ring. He turned on me suddenly.

"Is it true, Abdul Dost, that Jani Beg offered to give me a safe conduct to Jahangir?"

I started, for how could the news have come to him?

"The words of Jani Beg are false as a wolf's whine," I replied after thinking upon the matter. "If he made an offer, he did not mean to keep it. When Shirzad Mir gives his pledge of friendship, he will abide by it."

"I doubt it not!" he muttered. "It is long since I came to India, yet I am no nearer the ear of Jahangir than at first. I can not forget my mission——"

He broke off and walked away.

There came Bihor Jan, on the *ferang's* footsteps, and whispered to me in passing.

"Rose Face is beloved."

"Ho!" I was surprized "The *ferang?*"

"I know not. I have watched Said Afzel. The poet's eyes follow the girl when she walks by and there is a gleam in them. He plays to her on a guitar, lying at her side, and strokes the pearls of the necklace she wears. Sir Weyand likes it not. Why should he waste thought on the woman?"

Perhaps Bihor Jan would have liked the necklace of pearls for himself. For many hours I considered the matter. The *ferang* had known of the offer of Jani Beg, yet neither Shirzad Mir nor I had spoken of it.

God has strengthened the walls of Khanjut. I did not think any spy of the Uzbeks had climbed within them, so the thought came to me that some one had known the offer was to be made. Perhaps Said Afzel, perhaps Krishna Taya and perhaps Sir Weyand.

Here was a horse that would require grooming. I went to Sir Weyand and spoke what was on my mind. How was I to know that I blundered?

"The girl distresses you, Sir Weyand," I said bluntly. "Why not give her to Said Afzel? Then she will have a master. It is true that you do not desire a slave?"

"Death's life, Abdul Dost!" he swore. "It is true." He fell silent. "That might be best. Krishna Taya must be cared for. I think Said Afzel is fond of her. She is no more than a child."

I did not smile.

So it came to pass that Krishna Taya consented to serve Said Afzel. She gathered up her belongings in a bundle and went to the dwelling of the Uzbek prince.

Yet that night I found Sir Weyand walking moodily the length of her room, which was now empty as a year-old nightingale's nest. I think it was the first time he had been there. The room smelled of attar of rose, after the manner of a woman's apartment. I did not speak to him, for his face was not pleasant.

Nevertheless, I considered it was well. Now that Krishna Taya was with the Uzbek, she would not bother Sir Weyand—nor would it be so easy for her to talk with him.

I kept thinking of the meeting with Jani Beg which was to take place the next day. There seemed to be no danger. The plain before the castle was bare and no followers of the Uzbeks could approach the spot without being seen from the battlements. Since I was old enough to shoot an arrow at a stag, it was my task to safeguard the person of Shirzad Mir. I wearied my brains upon the matter of the meeting—without result. God had willed that I should not foresee what was to come to pass.

Still, one thing I did see.

The demon of unrest kept me awake that night and I walked the edge of the garden, past the stables and the door of Shirzad Mir. It was a still night and the splendor of the stars beat down on Khanjut. I harkened to the challenges of the sentries and the stamp of a hoof among the horses.

Then I heard voices among the bare trees of the garden. For the space milk takes to boil I waited, holding my breath. Then I stepped softly nearer the voices.

The *ferang* and Krishna Taya were talking together. By staring for a long time I made out their forms against the gray stretch of a wall. They stood close and whispered.

I heard Krishna Taya laugh and it sounded like the low murmur of a rivulet. Sir Weyand's voice came to me, harsh and urgent.

"You must not do this thing, Rose Face," he said.

Again I held my breath, but her whispered words were not clear. His reply was spoken in the swift, broken phrases of a man who is troubled by a great trouble. I caught the name of Shirzad Mir and bristled. Then—

"You will come and be at my side when the time is near," she whispered wistfully after the fashion of a woman who has bound a man by the silken cord of love.

"Aye, Rose Face."

Sir Weyand had made a decision and it had cost him much. For a space the two forms by the gray wall merged together, and the thought came to me that he had kissed her before she sped away through the garden. Thereupon he turned and went to his own quarters.

B'illah! If I had had her slim throat between my hands, I should have strangled her by the rope of pearls, for there had been pain and unwillingness in the voice of Sir Weyand, and this betokened ill to my lord.

This thing I told to Shirzad Mir after the dawn prayer, and he laughed in his beard.

"Of the servant who brings me food and of my foster brother, I might believe evil, Abdul Dost," he responded, "but not of Sir Weyand."

Yet I marked a flush in the cheeks of the Rajput maiden that morning and heard her sing in the apartment of Said Afzel for the first time since she had come to Khanjut.

What was I to do?

NOON came, the hour we were to ride to meet Jani Beg. Bihor Jan told me with a grin that Said Afzel was wrapped in opium dreams and lay like a stricken pig.

So, as this was my task, I had a litter brought, and the Afghan and I placed Said Afzel upon it. Then Krishna Taya, who watched, came and said that she also was to ride on the litter, as she would go with the Uzbek.

I would not consent. I smelled evil in this, as a hound smells the trace of a hare. Striding to Shirzad Mir, I demanded angrily that Krishna Taya should not go. Sir Weyand, who was listening, spoke curtly.

"It shall be as she wishes, Abdul Dost. Did not your master promise that any attendant of the prince might accompany him?"

Shirzad Mir made me a careless sign to be about my business. He was not one to suspect treachery, yet the *ferang's* eye had not met mine as he spoke.

As I had been ordered, I did. I placed a Kashmir shawl over the frame of the litter where Krishna Taya sat by Said Afzel's head. This was to guard the two from the sun and from curious eyes.

When it was time, I summoned Bihor Jan with seven others and accompanied them as they bore the litter from the castle across the courtyard and down the winding road to the plain.

Out over the drawbridge the litter passed. When we reached the spot of the meeting, I bade the eight set down their burden. When Shirzad Mir and Sir Weyand rode from the castle gate, I ordered the bearers to retire to Khanjut.

I sat moodily on the horse, watching the languid movement of Said Afzel's slippered feet—all that I could see of the poet—and thought blackly upon the danger to Shirzad Mir.

When he and the *ferang* gained my side, Shirzad Mir bade me withdraw ten spear-lengths toward Khanjut. This I did and, when I turned at my new station, the Uzbek party came in view.

Raja Man Singh, in all his finery, was

leading with Jani Beg, who sat his horse in grim silence. Behind them came the cavalcade of donkeys ushered by four or five miserable slaves. The little beasts carried weighty packs. I caught the glitter of brass upon one.

A cloud of dust rose about them and hung in the air, for there was no wind. The jewels gleamed in the turban of the Rajput and he laughed more than once, but Jani Beg did not laugh.

Nearer they came and nearer. I could see the sweat on the donkeys' shoulders and marked the outline of the powder boxes under the packs.

God has given me keen sight, and all that followed I saw clearly. I saw the Rajput halt the donkey-men and order them off with a contemptuous gesture and Jani Beg and Sir Weyand peer at the packs as if to make sure of what they held. I saw the beasts begin to nuzzle for grass to crop and Raja Man Singh ride up to the waiting two. By now the donkey-men were a good bow-shot distant.

Then all four of the riders dismounted, watching one another. I leaned upon the peak of my saddle and swallowed, hard, for my throat was dry. The dust settled down. I marked a pigeon wheeling overhead.

There was a great stillness on the plain of Badakshan. Khanjut was far, far distant and Shirzad Mir stood with three men at his side, all being armed.

The Rajput's white teeth showed in a laugh. This time Jani Beg smiled. He was in a cordial mood, for he advanced to Shirzad Mir and made a low *salaam*.

Afar off, I heard a holy man cry to prayers.

Then suddenly I saw the lean arms of Jani Beg spring forth and grip Shirzad Mir. Like a swift snake he twined about my master, holding Shirzad Mir's arms to his sides.

"Strike him!" cried Jani Beg. "In the throat above the armor!"

It was to the *ferang* that he had said this. The eyes of Raja Man Singh widened in astonishment.

Sir Weyand's muscles quivered, but he did not move to aid the treacherous Uzbek. Instead he stepped toward the litter.

The thing was clear to me. Jani Beg had thought that the *ferang* would slay Shirzad Mir, as he had cried for him to do. Something had gone amiss with Jani Beg's plan, for neither Sir Weyand nor the Rajput moved. Aye, the Rajput was a man of high honor.

Shirzad Mir strained at the Uzbek's grip. Jani Beg's face grew dark with rage. I dug my spurs deep into the side of my horse. He sprang forward—a leap that would have unsettled another rider—and I bore down on Jani Beg.

Hot was my heart with anger at the sight of Shirzad Mir helpless among the three. I had lifted my scimitar to strike down Jani Beg. I had galloped within arm's reach and there reined in my mount on its haunches.

Aye, I drew rein at sight of the three, for the Rajput and Sir Weyand and Shirzad Mir were staring not at Jani Beg but at the litter, and on the three faces was the mark of amazement and horror.

I also looked down at the litter. Krishna Taya had pushed back the shawl. She sat upon her knees with the head of Said Afzel on her lap. The sleek face of Said Afzel was red and his eyes glazed, as in the opium trance. He lay still, very still.

From his gaping mouth hung the end of a string of pearls. The pearls looked like the tip of a necklace. I had seen them before. I looked from the mottled face that glared up at me to the neck of the maiden. The necklace had gone from the throat of Krishna Taya.

She sat very straight on the litter and there was a smile on her childlike face.

"Here is Said Afzel, Jani Beg," she said softly, "whole and without a scratch upon his skin."

The Uzbek looked from her to the head of the dead man on her knee, and his mouth opened slowly. His arms that were about Shirzad Mir dropped to his side and he tried vainly to swallow, like one who has the palsy. I heard my lord mutter in his beard—"

"By the ninety holy names of God, I knew naught of this."

Yet I heeded not. The pigeon overhead fluttered away.

Then hate leaped into the evil face of Jani Beg as flame sears paper.

"Wench! Child of sin — traitress—" he grasped and then choked to silence.

"Nay," she spoke calmly. "What I promised you has been done. I have cut

the prop from him who would usurp the throne of Badakshan."

So great was the rage of Jani Beg that his hand trembled so he could scarce grip the dagger in his girdle. He raised the dagger with one hand; the other he twisted in the hair of the maiden, who looked up at him and smiled.

"It is well," I heard her whisper. "I have made clean the honor of the Rajput.

Neither I nor Shirzad Mir would have checked Jani Beg in the slaying of Krishna Taya, but the dagger did not reach her slender throat. Sir Weyand had gripped the hand that held the weapon. For the space of a long breath the eyes of the *ferang* and the Uzbek met and held. The arms of the two quivered and strained. The lips of the *ferang* were closed in a tight line.

Then Jani Beg spoke in level words.

"Every soul in Khanjut shall die if this woman is not slain."

Sir Weyand did not relax his grip.

"She avenged the wrong that was done her." His voice was curiously strained. He turned his face to the Rajput.

"Krishna Taya needs the protection of the Rajputs."

Raja Man Singh sighed and twisted a strand of his curly beard. His glance went from the end of the pearl necklace that had strangled Said Afzel to the woman.

"Come," he said at length, curtly. He took the girl and lifted her to the back of his horse behind the saddle. We knew and Jani Beg knew that Krishna Taya was now safe under the sword of the Rajput.

Many things were in my mind as I drove the donkeys up to Khanjut, following after Shirzad Mir and Sir Weyand. I thought of the reckless honor of Shirzad Mir that had let Jani Beg depart unharmed, because of his pledge. I wondered whether one of us would live to tell of the Uzbek storm that would be launched upon us because Sir Weyand had guarded the life of Krishna Taya when Jani Beg lusted for vengeance. But among these thoughts one was uppermost. It was a verse from the Koran.

Who knows what is in the heart of a woman?

TO A VOYAGER

by Berton Braley

SO YOU'RE off to storied China and to Java and Bombay
And the grin upon your face is high and broad;
Oh, you poor deluded mortal with your dreams of far away,
Where you "hear the paddles chunkin' from Rangoon to Mandalay,"
Do you think that I am envious and awed?

Do you fancy I'm made restless by your visions of the East
And your talk of sailing far across the foam?
Do you look on me as jealous or affected in the least
That you're squandering your money, while my savings are increased
As I labor on efficiently at home?

Do you figure for a moment that the trouble and the fret
Which a traveler today must undergo,
All the passports and the papers and the visés you must get,
And the bureaucratic satraps and officials to be met
And the bothers and delays that you must know?

Do you think I'd care to face them, do you somehow fancy me
Bearing all such tribulations with delight?
Do you dream I'd like to follow, that I'd give my soul to be
On a list of idle wasters who are putting out to sea?
Do you think so?—Well, you certainly are right!

Shepherds For Science

by W. C. Tuttle

Author of "Local Option in Loco Land," "Evidently Not," etc.

ME AND Dirty Shirt Jones prods our three burros across the border of Yaller Rock County, points north through the country where God dumped the leavings after He made the Bad Lands, and has visions of the old home town.

Me and Dirty has abandoned the idea of finding gold where she ain't, and right now we're herding our sore-footed jassacks towards the flesh-pots of Piperock town.

We're cutting around the side of a hill, when all to once we discerns the figure of a man setting on a rock ahead of us.

He looks a heap like he was figuring out the why and whatfor of all things. He humps there in the sun, a long, lean, pathetic-looking figure, despondency showing even in the curves of his cartridge-belt. I feels sorry for him long before our lead burro halts before him and lets us arrive.

The figure raises its head, peers at that gray burro, and when we stop he gets to his feet, turns to us and snaps:

"Hold up your hands! Both of you!"

Me and Dirty jerks our hands above our heads, and this fretful-looking *hombre* with the good-by forever mustache and weary eyes squints at us and says—

"You both solemnly swear to uphold the law vested in you as deputy sheriffs of Yaller Rock County, so help you Gawd?"

Me and Dirty nods and puts down our hands.

"Now," says Magpie Simpkins, sheriff of Yaller Rock County, "I feel a danged sight better."

We nods again, sets down beside him, and rolls smokes. After while Magpie scratches his nose and pinches out the light of his cigaret.

"What you doing here—hunting snakes?" asks Dirty.

Magpie shakes his head and digs into the dirt with his heels.

"Of course it ain't none of our business," says I, "but I would like to know why you inoculates us with sheriffitis without warning."

"Sheep," says he, soft-like. "Just sheep, Ike."

"Which there never was nor never will be," states Dirty. "You mean just plain sheep, don't you, Magpie?"

"That is as may be, Dirty."

Magpie fingers his mustache, and nods.

"Well," says I, "me and Dirty hankers for home, so I reckon we might as well drift along, Magpie."

"No," says he, sad-like. "You ain't going no place, Ike. You're arrived. Do you reckon I deputized you for fun?"

"Sheep," pronounces Dirty, "don't mean

nothing at all to me. I sure am contemptuous of all things pertaining to wool."

"Me, I votes against anything that blats," says I.

"I don't love 'em!" snaps Magpie. "Don't see me packing no sheep-dip to alleviate their sufferings, do you?"

We don't seem to, so we all sets there, humped over in the sun. After while Magpie clears his throat.

"'Alphabetical' Allen and 'Scenery' Sims own three thousand woollies," says he. "Scenery was a silent pardner, being as he's a cow-man, which hates sheep. Alphy gets Scenery to unhook a thousand dollars to buy some fancy stock. *Sabe?* Well, Alphy bought 'em—red, white and blue ones, in stacks, the same of which ain't productive none to speak about.

"Scenery chides Alphy to the extent that Alphy gets disgruntled and wishes to separate the herd, fifty-fifty, without considering the thousand he lost over the green cloth. Alphy contends that him and Scenery has agreed to suffer gains and losses together, and furthermore that he lost a lot of his own money at the same sitting, the same of which makes them feller sufferers.

"Such a open declaration causes some smoke and a little noise in Piperock, but neither of them gets shot up enough for us to declare a holiday. Scenery plasters a attachment on the herd, and then Alphy limps to Judge Steele's wickiup and prays for a receiver.

"Being as I'm the sheriff I has to serve said attachment, and also being as I'm a danged fool I'm appointed as the receiver. The county didn't elect me to herd sheep, gents. Over on the other side of that hill is the sheep. Somewhere over there is the tent. All very simple."

Magpie fusses with his mustache for a moment and then gets to his feet. He slaps our lead burro with his hat, and hitches up his belt.

"Come on, mules! Hump yourselves!"

"Where to, feller?" asks Dirty. "Them is our burros, Magpie."

"You won't need 'em," says he, weary-like, "so I'll take 'em home for you. All I ask is this: Take care of the sheep."

"Sheep?" I yells.

"S-h-e-e-p," he spells, counting the letters on the fingers of his left hand with the barrel of the gun in his right. "Just sheep, Ike. Keep—your—hands—off—that—gun!"

"Yea-a-a-a-a-h!" blats Dirty, excited-like. "Explain yourself, feller."

"You—" Magpie points at Dirty—"are the receiver. *Sabe?* I hereby makes you deputy receiver of them sheep, and I honors Ike by making him deputy attacher. Ike always was attached to sheep. May the Lord have a little mercy on your souls, and—don't lose any sheep. Come on, canaries."

Me and Dirty sets there like a pair of mummies and watches that forlorn-looking *hombre* herd our long-eared rolling-stock across the hills. Dirty jerks a rock at a sand-lizard, and yanks his hat down over his ears. We glares at each other for a moment.

"Shepherd!" hisses Dirty. "You sheep-attacher!"

"Ditto!" I hisses back at him. "You sheep-receptacle!"

IF THERE ever was an age when jackrabbits spoke with tin-whistle voices Scenery Sims was a throw-back to that period. Him and Alphabetical Allen are two things, the same of which the dictionary designates as inanimate objects. If you can imagine a pair of ciphers with the rims rubbed out—you've got my opinion of them two *hombres* to a gnat's eyebrow.

"I'm going to kill Magpie Simpkins some day," says Dirty, mean-like.

"Uh-huh," says I. "That sounds like you, Dirty. You're always going to kill somebody the day after. You think too slow."

We sets there a while longer, and then Dirty yawns.

"Might as well find 'em, I reckon. You attach 'em and I'll do the receiving, Ike."

We pokes over the ridge, and after going about a mile we hears the voices of lamblets, and then we sees the teepee, which we deciphers to be the sheep-camp. In her callow youth she might have been a tent, but the wear and tear of sheeping existence has put her in the sere and yaller leaf, with a touch of color, where somebody's red-flannel shirt has patched up a hole in one side.

"Well," says Dirty, "she ain't much, but it's home, Ike."

"It is ever so humble," I agrees, and we slid down to it.

As we walks up to the front the flap opens, and out comes the head of an inhuman being. This face is so classified, 'cause no human being could have so much hair on its face and still breathe—not without gills.

"Holee henhawks!" gasps Dirty. "Who have we here?"

"Aye am de ship-hoorder," comes from a hole in the hair.

"Bale of hay from Sweden!" gasps Dirty, and the hair opens again.

"Aye am de ship-hoorder."

"What a dugout for dandruff!" says I.

"Yah! Who are you fallers?"

"Your successors," says I. "You can tie up your war-sack and pilgrim."

"Haw?" He seems to think it over, and shakes his head.

"Aye tank Aye stay. Das iss my yob. Aye am de ship-hoorder."

"You don't need to classify yourself," grins Dirty. "Nature tagged you. Us two are going to dry-nurse this bunch of animated socks and underwear, so you might as well kiss 'em a fond fare-thee-well."

The hairy one shakes his head, and peers at us out of a pair of little eyes.

"He say to me, 'O-o-o-laf, I gif you twanty dollar month.' He say dat an' Aye stay for one month. Fifteen day Aye stay today."

"This has been a long day for you, Olaf," agrees Dirty. "Ike, do you get that jargon?"

"Sure. Alphabetical or Scenery promised him twenty a month, and today makes fifteen days he has reigned."

"No rain," says Olaf. "Dry as ——! Aye stay."

He ducked back under the tent, and a second later he sticks his head out again, and beside that bunch of hair is the muzzle of a rifle.

"Aye tank Aye stay," he announces, and ducks inside again.

"Defied by a barber-boycotter," grunts Dirty. "Are we bluffed, Ike?"

"Not from my point of view," says I. "You take one side and I'll take the other." There was four guy-ropes on each side, and it just took four kicks per each to make that tent unsupporting, and the poor old thing comes down upon Olaf. Then me and Dirty assumes reclining positions, while Olaf wastes a few cartridges, wild-like.

Then he emerges from a hole in the wreck, in time to be mounted by Dirty Shirt, who rode that shepherd to the queen's taste. Olaf pitched considerable, but gave it up, and seemed receptive to civilized argument.

"Still think you'll stay?" asks Dirty.

"Val, Aye go pretty soon but Aye coom back now," pants Olaf, pawing the alkali out of his whiskers. "Aye boost somet'ing."

"You talk like you had," admits Dirty.

"Aye coom back—yah! Aye get de law."

"Yeah?" says Dirty. "Look at us, shepherd. We're the law. *Sabe?*"

He looks at us, and his whiskers seem a heap agitated.

"You—are—de—law?" he asks, deliberate-like.

"You are looking at it," grins Dirty. "How does she look?"

"Val—" he hitches up his rope belt, and picks up his war-sack—"val, Aye can say dis mooch: Yorge Hokansen hay say to me, 'O-o-olaf, das country has too mooch bum law and no yustice!' Yorge iss smart—you bet."

And me and Dirty stood there and watched the Hairy One fade out over the hills towards Silver Bend.

"I hope he forgets us before he loads up on alcohol," says Dirty. "I hate to chase even a shepherd off his job, but I reckon we're sort of shepherds-in-law, Ike, and we ain't to blame. Let's inventory the grub."

In the grub-box is one can of milk, one can of corn, a little coffee and a quart of raw alcohol.

Dirty nods over the assortment.

"That shepherd was good for fifteen days more, Ike, but the law sure is going to suffer internally. Let's put up the tent."

Olaf left too soon to enjoy the rain. She came down plentiful and awful, and demonstrated to us that red flannel ain't noways water-proof. When the morning came we peers out into a wet world, and tries to dry out enough tobacco to make a smoke. Then cometh a interruption from without:

"Say, you lousy, slew-footed, blat-headed sheep-herder, come out here!"

"Somebody calling you, Dirty," says I.

"Not me, Ike. Somebody has been getting your mail."

"Coming out?" yells the voice again. "You sap-headed snake-hunter!"

"Talks like a cow-man," opines Dirty. "Maybe he's making us a visit."

DIRTY throws the tent-flap open, and we gets a view of a feller on a roan bronc.

"Say, you ——" he begins, but he's looking down the muzzle of Dirty's gun, and his voice fails him.

"Speaking to me?" asks Dirty, soft-like.

"You better put down that gun," says he. "It might save you a lot of trouble."

"Yes," says Dirty, "and if it went off and killed you, feller, it would likely save you a lot of trouble, if this is the way you're in the habit of speaking to strangers. What seems to itch you?"

"Your sheep!" he yelps. "Half your danged woollies are over my line! You agreed to keep them stinking sheep this side of the Mesquite, and this morning I finds half of them across.

"You get 'em out of there pretty danged sudden-like or I'll massacree the bunch. *Sabe?*"

"You don't dare," opines Dirty.

"The —— I don't! Just about why?"

"Against the law. Them sheep are within the law, mister."

"Yah? Well, let me tell you something, you lousy shepherd: I'll get my punchers and we'll show you! We'll chase 'em so far that ——"

"Get off!" orders Dirty. "You're up so high I can't hear your voice."

He had a gun, but I reckon he also had a weak heart, so he got off and gave me his gun. I reckon he'd 'a' given us his weak heart, too, if we'd asked for it, 'cause Dirty has a nervous way of fingering a trigger.

"What in —— are you going to do now?" he asks.

"Hoord ships," grins Dirty. "I'm ship-hoorder."

"Oh!" says he. "You're the Swede herder that 'Alcohol' Adams spoke about."

"What did he say?"

"Said you didn't have brains enough to wad a shotgun with."

"What do you think?" I asks.

"Well—" he looks at Dirty's gun, serious-like—"well, not to mean any offense, but I'd say that Alcohol exaggerated a little; he meant a twenty-two."

Be it known that Alcohol Adams is so ornery that his own dog barks at him. He'd steal money from his own kids, and then lick thunder out of them for losing it. Mosquitoes, horse-flies and rattlesnakes turn him down like a white chip in a no-limit stud game, and his soul is so small and elusive that he has to drink straight alcohol in order to exhilarate it.

Yaller Rock got so disgusted with him that they sent him to the Legislature, where he collected all the loose money in sight, and showed his appreciation of things by passing a few laws favoring sheep. He orated his views in Piperock, the same of which was contrary to our religion, and—let me admit that some poor shooting was done.

When he hit Paradise there was three hunks of lead in the cantle of his saddle, which proved we held too low or the range was too great. We held a mass meeting that night, and Magpie Simpkins chided us over our lack of ability.

We agreed to set aside six practise shots per day, against the time that Alcohol or any other lawmaker might appear in our midst. I hopes you hereby *sabes* something of Alcohol's nature.

"You can't run no blazer on me," says this feller. "I'm 'Sandy' Sorenson. What you going to do?"

"Borrow your bronc," says Dirty. "We'll ride that roan double, Ike."

"Won't ride double," says he.

"Maybe it never has," corrects Dirty, taking his foot out of the stirrup. "Come up, Ike."

Sandy sure diagnosed that bronc right. I'd trail my bet with his when he says it won't ride double—not meek-like. A bronc can't do its best with two hundred and ninety pounds on its back, but I hope to gosh I never ride that bronc single-handed when it's riled.

Man, that animal done everything except fly, and at that the danged thing went high enough to convince the most skeptical that all it needed was a short pair of wings to make good in that respect. First it gives a correct imitation of a post-hole digger, and then it goes down that gully, changing ends like a whirligig. I've got my wish-bone hooked over Dirty's shoulder, and every hop I can feel my finger slipping higher and higher up that cantle.

Sandy rides a double-rig saddle, and when

we hits the first turn of the gully I feels the rear cinch bust. From that on it's like riding a rocking-chair over sticks of dynamite.

The roan bucks along the edge of the washout, the bottom of which is about ten feet below us, and I just starts to yelp, "Don't get scared, Dirty; she won't buck down there," when we hit the bottom, and I bit my tongue over the first word.

My vertebræ comes together like a string of box-cars getting hit by a wild engine, and then we yanked out of there and went angling up the hill as fast as that bronc can run.

"Still alive?" I yelps.

"From my chin on up!" he yells. "Wonder what this fool wants to climb the hill for, Ike?"

"Can't you stop her?" I asks.

"Bridle's gone, Ike. Ha-a-a-ang on!"

We found out why the roan wanted to get a down-hill pull on us, 'cause as soon as we hit the grade the animal inaugurates a new style of bucking. Was it effective? Oh, man, I'd rise to remark it was. I just hung on and prayed. I used up all the white man's religion I ever heard about, and I'm just beginning to make medicine to the totem of the Alaskan Siwash when the cinch breaks.

I feels myself float into space, and then I goes out in a blaze of bright lights. After while Old Man Misery seems to come along and runs his fingers all over my carcass, and then I opens my eyes. I'm laying on my back with my feet up the side of a rock, and a short distance from me is Dirty, hanging by the back of his shirt to an old mesquite-snag.

STANDING there beside a pair of packed burros is the queerest-looking pair of pelicans I ever seen. They're both wearing hard hats and black-rimmed specs, and what you might expect such persons to wear in the line of shirts, collars and neckties, but from the waist on down they're clad in chaps and boots.

One of 'em is wearing a pair of Mexican spurs—the kind with rowels the size of a dollar and eighty-five cents. One of them has a belt draped around his waist, and in the holster is one of them single-shot twenty-two pistols. The other is packing a pump shotgun.

One of 'em removes his specs and polishes 'em, careful-like.

"Quite remarkable, my friend!" says he. "Quite remarkable. The—er—equine was no doubt desirous of removing its burden."

"One would be led to accept such a theory," nods the other. "We have observed the effect, my dear Middleton, but of course we know nothing of the cause. It really was quite remarkable."

"Holee suffering scissorbills!" grunts Dirty, leaving half his shirt on the snag and staggering to his feet. He stares at them and at me.

"Ike, do you see the same thing I do?" he whispers.

"I hope so," says I, lowering my feet. "I hope I do, Dirty, otherwise I'm a goner mentally. Is one of them apparitions wearing spurs?"

"Thank ——!" gasps Dirty. "We see the same little details, Ike."

"You see, Pettingill?" crows one of 'em. "You objected to the boots and spurs, but the customs of a country must be observed. It is well."

"Perhaps they will enlighten us to the best of their ability," says Pettingill, adjusting his specs. "It will do no harm to inquire."

"My dear gentlemen," says the one called Middleton, "may we ask you a question?"

"You can take a chance," nods Dirty.

"Well—er—before I ask the question it might be well to introduce ourselves. I am Professor Middleton of Boston, and the gentleman with me is Professor Pettingill of Philadelphia."

"We appreciates it considerable," says Dirty, solemn-like. "I am of the Jones tribe, from here or hereabouts, and called Dirty Shirt. The person with me is a Harper offspring, called Ike. Where are you from, Ike?"

"There or thereabouts," says I.

"Exactly," says Professor Middleton. "Now the question is this: Pettingill and myself are dabbling in a few problems outside of our regular work, and this one has come to our notice: Are sheepherders really insane? Do they acquire insanity from their occupation? Is there anything about a—er—sheep that would cause a normal man to lose his mind, as it were?"

"Yes," nods Dirty. "It is."

"Exactly," says Middleton. "You are following me?"

"I hope nobody sees me if I do," grins Dirty.

"I contend that one's information on such a problem must come from personal observation and not from hearsay or opinions of others. We refuse to take circumstantial evidence, as it were. It seems that some of the natives are—well, a bit touchy on the subject. I asked a gentleman for his opinion, and he—well he——"

"How so?" I asks.

"At your city of Silver Bend I approached a man who was clad in leather trousers, and I asked him if I could get a little information from him regarding sheep. I am sure my tones were not belligerent, and I properly introduced myself before propounding the question."

"What did he say?" I asked.

"He did not answer. He deliberately crushed my hat over my nose and kicked my feet from under me."

"It is very true," nods the other one. "I—I thought perhaps we had met up with just the character we were investigating—a mentally unbalanced sheep person. I soothed him to the best of my ability, begging him to curb his profanity. Thinking to humor him, I said—in kind tones:

"'My dear fellow, there was no offense intended to you or your sheep. We all love the little lambs.'"

"Then what?" asks Dirty.

"Well, it may have been a coarse way of describing it, but another fellow came along after the mentally unbalanced one had stridden away, and he said—

"'My ——, what a mess!'"

"Who told you that shepherds were all crazy?" asks Dirty.

"It has been said," replies Professor Middleton. "We are investigating."

"Just what does the word 'crazy' mean?" I asks.

"Crazy?" Professor Pettingill looks shocked at our ignorance. "Crazy means decrepit; weak; feeble; of weakened or disordered intellect."

"Come to think of it," remarks Professor Middleton, "that party who assaulted us was neither decrepit, weak nor feeble, Pettingill."

"He was likely mad as ——," opines Dirty.

"At least that is a good simile," nods Pettingill.

"Just about where are you pelicans headed for?" asks Dirty.

"Headed for?" asks Pettingill. "Where are we going? We desire to locate as near as possible to the habitat of the shepherd. We purchased the mules from a person in Silver Bend, who assisted us in selecting our provender. He tied it securely on the mules, and we haven't taken if off since because we are afraid we could not get it on again."

"How long have you been in the hills?" I asks.

"Since yesterday morning."

"Suffering scissorbills!" snorts Dirty. "You left them burros packed all night, 'cause you— Say, you fellers ought to get jobs herding sheep. You sure qualify."

"Ah!" says Middleton, pleased-like. "Do you—er—think it could be arranged?"

"To herd sheep?"

"Exactly. It would put us closely in touch with the subject. We could make a close study of the effects of the sheep animal upon the human brain. My dear Pettingill, that would be wonderful! Could it be arranged?"

"I'd rise and howl that it could," says Dirty. "You get the job."

"This is too good to be true!" exclaims Pettingill.

"The same to you and many of them," says Dirty. "Hump yourselves, mules; we're going home."

THEM professors seemed a heap interested in our rag house. They makes a lot of notes in their little books while Dirty lays a fire in the little sheet-iron stove. Then they wants to know where the sheep are.

"You fellers want to be regular shepherds, don't you?" asks Dirty.

"Oh, certainly," says Pettingill. "We're prepared for the worst. I am anxious to get first-hand information on the subject. Professor Middleton and myself are never content to take hearsay evidence for any weighty subject."

Being as we ain't never seen the sheep ourselves, we has to trust to luck. We leads them pelicans to the top of a tall butte, and from there we gets a glimpse of the herd. Several hundred are feeding on the other side of a little creek, which we deciphers to be Mesquite Creek.

"Now, what—er—procedure do we adopt?" asks Pettingill.

"Say that again," says Dirty. "I missed it a foot."

"What are we supposed to do in a case of this kind?"

"Oh ——!" says Dirty, and then he cranes his neck. "Look what's going on down there!"

We sees four punchers riding toward them sheep, sort of swinging around to get between them and the creek. They bunches the whole works, and proceeds to drift 'em over the hill. I recognizes one of 'em as Sandy Sorensen, on the roan, so I reckon it got home all right.

"Exactly," nods Pettingill, wiping his glasses. "No doubt everything is all right, but just why are those men taking away our sheep?"

"Gents," says Dirty, rolling a smoke, "you have witnessed the theft of a few hundred sheep. With your own eyes you have seen part of your herd swiped by outlaws. It is a common occurrence hereabouts."

"Do you mean that we have been robbed in the broad light of day?" asks Pettingill, shocked-like. "You do? Well, I am amazed!"

"Yes," says Dirty. "It is such things that help to make us crazy."

Maybe I could tell more of this tale; maybe not. Professor Pettingill knows things that I don't, so I'll let him tell the rest of the tale as he told it to his friends. Folks, meet Professor Pettingill, who is now going to talk.

MR. HARPER'S tale, up to the present, is partly true, or as Dirty Shirt says, "Near the truth as Ike ever told anything." I objected to the word "pelican" as applied to Professor Middleton and myself, but Ike assured me that it was a term of endearment, so I will let it remain.

Many of their quaint phrases are in my note-book, but as yet I have not had time to investigate their meaning. Their vocabulary of profanity seemed unlimited, and at times very amusing. It seems that they had little reverence for the finer things of life, and when we gently remonstrated with them, the one called Dirty Shirt said:

"Oh, go to ——! What do you think this is—a ladies' cemetery?"

I as yet fail to see the reference to a burial-place.

As Mr. Harper has already told you, we sat on the slope of the hill and watched the outlaws purloin part of the flock. I believe that my ancestors were fighting-stock, for my gorge arose at the sight, and I was filled with visions of revenge. Perhaps it was the spirit of the West that possessed me, but at any rate I arose and shook a folded fist in their direction.

"Go ahead and cuss, professor," said Dirty Shirt. "If you get stuck for a word, maybe me or Ike can supply it."

Now, I am going to make no attempt to quote them. At times they talk in academic English, and at other times a jargon. Professor Middleton will bear me out in saying that their language is both weird and wonderful, and also easy to acquire.

I am sure that our friends were shocked at our conversation when we related our experiences, and it required constant vigilance over our tongues to keep from—as Ike said—"talking like a he-man." I feel that Middleton was a worse offender than I in that respect.

I said to Dirty Shirt—

"We shall most surely follow them and recover our property, shall we not?"

"Not," answered Ike. I am leaving off the prefix "Mr." as they rarely use it in conversation.

"But," said I, "it is a plain case of theft, is it not?"

"Well," replied Dirty Shirt, "you can call it anything from petty larceny to train robbery, professor, but I'll be —— if I ever was so fond of sheep that I'd sacrifice my skin in their interests."

"Do you mean you are going to let them keep the sheep?" asked Middleton.

"——'s delight!" exclaimed Dirty Shirt. "You still talking sheep? Let's go back to the rag shanty and scare up a feed."

So back we went. They showed no worry over the loss of the sheep, and I am certain they must be of value. The chops alone would be worth— But why quote prices? They led us back to the tent, and then Dirty Shirt said:

"If you pelicans want to be regular shepherds you've got to learn how to cook. See what you can find in your own packs and then scare up a batch of biscuits."

Our pack-luggage had been stacked in front of the tent, and as I walked over

to investigate our provender Dirty Shirt added—

"Cook anything you see, 'cause my big insides are eating up the little ones."

He did not use the word "insides," but its vulgar equivalent.

"Scare up a biscuit?" asked Middleton. "How does one scare a biscuit?"

"Build a fire in the stove," said Dirty Shirt. "All you have to do is touch a match to the kindling, as the fire is all set. Then we'll show you the next step."

I went inside the tent, knelt beside the stove and scratched a match.

The sticks of wood over the kindling caught my eye. I removed one as I touched the match. One must betray ignorance to acquire knowledge, so I carried one out to them.

"Pardon me," said I, "but is this some new preparation to combat the scarcity of fuel?"

Dirty Shirt glanced at the stick, then at the smoke coming out of the small stovepipe, and then he and Ike grasped their hats in their hands and dashed away. It really was ludicrous.

"Come on, you —— fools!" cried Ike without stopping to explain.

"What an amazing thing to do!" exclaimed Middleton. "Why in the world are they——"

It is of course ridiculous to say that the world came to an end before Middleton's question had been propounded, but that is what seemed to happen. The earth seemed to vomit dust, flame and smoke, and I seemed to feel myself being carried away. Ages later I awoke. I turned my head, and then said to myself—

"Pettingill, you have been knocked topsy-turvy."

I really had. I seemed to be trying to stand on my head in wet clay, although in reality I found that I was reclining, head down, on the side of a bank of what might be termed an abandoned water-course.

Modesty forbids that I tell what clothing is missing from my person. I managed to regain my natural poise, and turned sufficiently to allow my feet to slide down.

Near me is a section of the tent containing the red-flannel patch, and as I take stock of my surroundings that patch seemed to loosen, and from out through the aperture emerges the head of Professor Middleton.

"My dear fellow, are you all right?" I asked.

He looked at me in a dazed sort of a way, and then spat out—along with a mouthful of clay:

"Go to ——! What do you think this is—a ladies' cemetery?"

I could readily see that he was speaking from his subconscious mind, quoting from Dirty Shirt's reply to me. He got to his feet, not without visible effort, and we both looked at Dirty Shirt and Ike. Their gaze seemed inquiring, but I was as much at sea as they.

"We are still alive, as you may see," I volunteered.

"Takes a lot of dynamite to kill a shepherd," nodded Dirty.

"Dynamite?" asked Middleton. "A powerful explosive?"

"Concentrated ——," nodded Dirty. "Regular old bustem quick. Some son-of-a-goat loaded the stove on us. Must 'a' been several sticks."

"Five, I believe," I replied. "Here is the sixth."

I opened my hand and showed them a mass of what appeared to be fine sawdust and grease.

"My ——!" cried Dirty, not profanely. "The old dictionary-digger choked that stick to a mush! Don't drop it!"

THIS order came too late. I suddenly realized what I was doing—what I had in my hands—and I cast it down as a deadly thing. Dirty and Ike seemed to sigh with relief, and then Dirty said:

"Lord, I ain't got much religion. I don't *sabe* nothing about Jonah and the Ark, but I sure hands up thanks to whoever is to blame for blocking the trigger of that thing. Amen."

"Have you any special creed or religious affiliations?" asked Middleton.

"No." Dirty Shirt shook his head. "Not yet, but if you two are going to hang around this range for any length of time, I'm going to join something—that's a dead cinch."

"There was a cap in that stick, Dirty," said Ike. "Wonder it didn't go."

"Uh-huh," grunted Dirty. "There's something that protects drunks and idiots, Ike."

"Yes, Dirty, you're right. Even them

danged burros was removed far enough away to be safe. Drunks, idiots and jassacks—all under protection."

He certainly was not referring to Middleton or myself, as neither of us ever touches liquor in any form.

Later on I insisted on knowing the probable destination of the sheep.

"Over in Sandy's corral," said Dirty Shirt. "Everything is grist that comes to his mill. He'll demand payment for the range he thinks the sheep ate."

"Oh, is he a miller?" asked Middleton.

Dirty and Ike exchanged glances, and Ike said—

"That's what education does for a feller, Dirty."

Education had little to do with it, as any one would know that no one but a miller would have need of grist, and he spoke of "his mill." Dirty proved adept as a chef, and Middleton and myself enjoyed the first real meal since we left the dining-car. When it grew dark Ike kicked out the fire, leaving us in darkness. I remonstrated, but he said:

"Build you one if you want it, old-timer, but remember this: Any jasper who will load your stove won't hesitate to shoot at night."

We spread our blankets in the dark, and Ike and Dirty immediately fell to sleep. The novelty of looking at the stars, and the noises of the night kept Middleton and myself awake. I thought of the stolen sheep and we conversed in whispers.

"The loss of so many sheep must be greater than they care to acknowledge," whispered Middleton. "They are like the American Indian inasmuch as they are stoical under loss or punishment. It would be wonderful if we could recover the sheep. I am beginning to like them, Pettingill."

We shook hands over it, procured our shotgun and pistol, and stole away silently, except for the tinkle of Middleton's spurs.

We crawled out of hearing, got our bearings from the stars and started on our well-meant errand. We were going in single file along the side of a hill on a tiny path, which showed white in the dim light, when suddenly we were confronted by a gigantic figure.

It towered above us, a black hulk, coming at a fast walk. I tried to avoid the impact, but slipped and fell right into the path of the monster.

The next instant it fell over me and into Middleton. I retained my shotgun. I had no way of knowing the fate of poor Middleton, but I ran a short distance before I stopped.

I saw the silhouette of it against the sky and for the first time in my life I fired a gun. The impact of the shot threw me into a cactus-patch, and I feared for a time that it had crushed my lower jaw. I managed to tear myself away from the clinging barbs, and stood erect.

"Middleton!" I cried. "Professor Middleton!"

"Well, what in —— do you want!"

You can readily see that he was beginning to acquire the dialect of our associates.

"I shot it!" I cried. "I shot it!"

"Pettingill—" his voice was a bit sarcastic—"I will always thank the man who sold me these leather trousers. I didn't get hit with more than—let me see— Oh, I am unable to estimate."

"Heavens! Did I hit you, Middleton?"

"Yes, you did—you—er—pelican!"

"What became of the monster?" I asked. "Did it say anything?"

"It spoke. It knocked me down, got to its feet and said, 'Aye am de shiphoorder,' and then it went on, Pettingill; it went on—with my shirt in its hands. If you ever feel that you have to shoot again—hold lower, old-timer."

Then we went on. Middleton complained about the effects of the shooting, while I suffered untold agonies from cactus spines and the effects of that shotgun.

"We should soon be able to see the mill," said Middleton, peering into the night, "but all I can see is a huddle of low buildings. One is larger than the rest, but none would be suitable for milling."

We walked closer and closer. Finally a canine barked several times, and a man came to the door of the larger house. Middleton and I crouched down behind an old vehicle.

"Some more of those —— coyotes, I reckon," said the man in the door. "They smell the sheep."

And then he shut the door.

"They do not mistrust us," said I, "which simplifies things. No doubt they will be enraged at the coyote in the morning.

Do you know what a —— coyote is, Middleton?"

"No, I do not, and perhaps it is just as well."

Just then we heard the gentle lowing of a sheep. Perhaps it was the call of one to its mate, and we knew we had come to the right place. We crossed to a fence, inside of which we found the sheep.

The gate was locked, but Middleton immediately went to work to break it with a rock. The noise he made seemed to irritate the canine again, causing it to emit staccato barks.

"I fear that the dog will upset our plans, Pettingill," said Middleton as we heard the door open again.

"Not at all," I reassured him. "We will use strategy. A coyote is a young wolf, don't you see? I will dissemble."

I have never made a study of the cries and calls of wild animals, but I did the best I could. Clearing my throat, I began a low-voiced howling, such as one hears in the Zoo at feeding-time.

The dog only barked the louder, and then came voices.

"COYOTE ——!" cried 'one. "That's a banshee with bronchial trouble, Sandy."

I stopped howling, the dog stopped barking, and then we heard:

"I've a hunch, Micky. Give me them shells loaded with number sevens. This ain't no buckshot party."

"Ah! Thank goodness, the barrier is removed!" exclaimed Middleton, and I heard the chain fall.

Middleton gave the gate a shove, and it creaked open.

"Sic 'em, Shep!" cried a voice.

It is likely that the dog misunderstood orders, as I feel sure that its master meant us when he said "'em," but the dog circled us and went through the fence after the sheep.

"Run!" exclaimed Middleton. "They're coming out!"

Middleton was right.

Just at that moment one of those sheep tried to go between my legs. It was a large one—too large, in fact. I grasped it with one hand, quickly, holding my gun in the other, and attempted to ride it away, but it sprang for a place where all of the fence was missing except for a barbarous wire stretched along the top; and I went backward into the dirt.

I managed to roll over and get to my hands and knees just in time to be struck a murderous blow from the rear, which projected me under the wire and outside the fence. There may have been other openings in that fence, but I will wager that a large per cent. of those sheep came through there and walked over me. After the procession of sharp hoofs had passed me I crawled back and recovered my gun. I had no idea of where Middleton had gone. In fact I don't believe I gave him a thought.

I got to my feet and limped away, feeling rather dazed, as a man might feel after being hard hit, as it were. I toiled up the side of a hill, and suddenly I discerned Middleton. I knew him by the silhouette of his hat against the sky.

"Thank goodness, I have found you!" I exclaimed.

"Same to you," he replied; and it was not Middleton's voice but the voice of the party who suggested the banshee.

I saw the glisten of his gun as he turned. I don't know what prompted me to do it, but I leveled my gun and pulled the trigger.

The roar deafened me and the concussion hurled me backward, but I had presence of mind enough to crawl away. Suddenly I fell into a depression, where I lay quiet.

"Hey!" cried a voice. "Was that you, Micky?"

"It was—worse luck to me, Sandy!"

"Was it a shepherd?"

"I won't swear to nothing until I assay meself, but from the feel of me I'd say it was a duck-hunter. Ouch! The divil blazed away at sixty feet, and almost cut the boots off me legs! Bird-shot be the handful!"

"Which way did he go, Micky?"

"How should I know? I always hides me head in a storm of bird-shot."

"Where in thunder did you get that hard hat?"

"Down be the corral. Did you ever know a shepherd to wear a baked bonnet before, Sandy?"

They talked in low tones for a few moments, and then I heard the one called Sandy say:

"Well, they're well scattered, and there's no use hunting in the dark. Next time we'll pack Winchesters when them —— woollies cross the Mesquite."

"Sure, and I'll wear armor next time I hunt for hard-hatted shepherds in the night time," replied the other, and their voices died away into the night.

I managed to clamber out of the hole, suffering extreme torture all the while. I had not the slightest idea of direction; in fact I seemed to be lost. At any rate I climbed the hill, went down the other side and then climbed another, where I sat down on a rock.

It was very, very quiet up there. Finally a dog came along. I tried to be friendly, but it slunk away at my whistle. Then another one came; and another. I said to myself—

"Pettingill, there must be kennels near here."

From a distant butte, against the pale light of the moon, I saw several more, and then came a wailing howl. From near me came a blood-curdling answer. I said to myself—

"Pettingill, those 'dogs' are wolves!"

The realization was painful. I really believe I grew homesick. In all that waste I could not see a tree. I peered around. Ah! On a not too distant ridge stood a tree.

I stood erect, grasped my gun, and hurried up the slope, spurred onward by the howls of at least a million savage throats. Perhaps it was undignified, but I ran; actually ran. Luckily the branches grew low, and I was able, suffering as I was, to climb into the sanctuary of those thick branches. I breathed a sigh of relief, and exclaimed aloud—

"Thank Heaven for this tree!"

And from above me came—

"Pettingill, it is fortunate that you spoke, as I was about to pistol you."

"Middleton!" I gasped. "You here in this tree?"

"Yes. I could find no other. I—I thought perhaps you—that perhaps that sheep had came back; don't you see?"

"Sheep? Sheep do not climb trees, Middleton."

"Well, I am glad to know there is some one thing that it could not do. I would readily believe it could climb, Pettingill."

"How did you happen to pick this tree?" I asked.

"I claim no credit whatever, Pettingill. As the sheep came out of the gate, one of them struck me very, very abruptly. I landed outside the fence, where I tried to conceal myself, but it searched until it found me, and each time I tried to get up it knocked me down. From there to this tree was just a succession of hard knocks."

"That is really too bad," I replied. "I am physically imperfect myself, Middleton. I think there is nothing more that could hurt me. Have you a comfortable seat up there, Middleton?"

"Wouldn't use it if I had!" he actually grunted at me. "Right at present I am hanging over a bough like a carpet on a line. Pettingill, I may never, never sit down again."

WE CHEERED each other as much as possible through the long night, and were truly grateful when morning came. Looking at Middleton gave me a faint idea of my own appearance. He had neither shirt nor hat, and the upper part of his body was streaked with blood and dirt. His limbs were so stiff he could hardly walk, and mine were little better.

I still retained my hat, although the crown would open and shut in the breeze. We wished for the coats we had left at our camp. Then we walked in what might be the right direction, and suddenly came to a road. Not a well traveled thoroughfare, it is true, but at least a roadway. Along this we limped for a while, when we heard the creaking of a wagon behind us.

"Just suppose there should be some ladies aboard," suggested Middleton, and we hastily crouched down beside some bushes.

When the equipage was almost up to us we saw that the team was being driven by a man, and that there were no ladies. We would ask for a ride. We stepped into the road and threw up our hands, signaling him to stop. The driver was smoking his pipe, but as the team halted he opened his mouth, letting the pipe fall to the ground.

Then he sprang to the ground, grasped his hat in his hand, and ran back down the road as fast as possible. His limbs were very badly bowed.

"What a ridiculous thing to do!" exclaimed Middleton. "Abandon his equipage in this manner before we have an opportunity to question him. What will we do, Pettingill?"

"We will drive on. No doubt the team will take us some place. It is reasonable

to suppose that a road leads to something. I hope we will eventually arrive at some place where a physician resides."

We climbed in, and Middleton took charge of the lines. It was much better than walking, although neither of us could occupy the seat. All went well until we came to a steep hill, where the horses seemed unable to check the speed of the wagon. I spoke sharply to Middleton about our speed, and he rudely replied:

"Oh, go to ——! If you're going to be a shepherd, be a regular one—dang it!"

I fear that Middleton would soon acquire a profane vocabulary. Somehow we seemed to lose the road. I spoke to Middleton about it, thinking he did not know, and he shouted in my ear—

"Go get it if you want it—you danged pelican!"

I pondered over his apparent rudeness, and the next instant the team seemed to be taking us straight over a sharp pitch, the wagon swaying sharply as it crashed over rocks and brush. I caught a glimpse of the bottom of another abandoned water-course, and then, with a lurching crash, I was hurled into oblivion.

I DREAMED of lying under a plashing fountain, and as I opened my eyes I looked up at Dirty Shirt, who was pouring water into my face from his large hat. I heard Ike's voice say:

"This old pelican ain't dead, Dirty. He just spat out another tooth."

"Say, professor, when did you take a job driving a sheep-wagon?" asked Dirty Shirt.

"Middleton was driving," I whispered. My voice was strangely weak.

"Well—" Dirty Shirt scratched his head and peered across the hills—"well, as a driver he's got more intestines than judgment. He sure is the short-cut kid."

After a while Middleton sat up and essayed a grin. Several of his front teeth were missing, which gave him a leering look. The wagon had smashed to kindling-wood, but they told us that the team escaped serious injury. Dirty Shirt and Ike told us to take it easy while they rounded up the team, which we tried to do.

My gun was in the wreckage, but beyond a deep dent in the barrel it was in very good shape. There were still four cartridges in it, and I managed to manipulate one into the firing-chamber. It is well to be prepared.

Middleton had acquired a pronounced lisp, caused, no doubt, by the missing teeth. Suddenly we saw a man on horseback coming down toward us. Ordinarily I would have paid little heed to him, but we were becoming chary of strangers. I stood up and threw my gun to my shoulder.

"What in —— is the idea?" he asked, halting. "Put down that gun!"

"Thoot him!" lisped Middleton. "Thoot him if he cometh too cloth."

"Have a little sense and put down that gun," said the man.

"Don't let him ditharm your thuthpithions," warned Middleton.

"Go back!" I ordered. "You are in danger."

"——'s delight!" he exclaimed. "There must 'a' been a break in the loco-lodge."

And we watched him ride back to the top of the hill.

"Nithe generalthip," applauded Middleton. "Look—thomebody elthe."

Another rider had joined him, and they both came riding down to us.

"I shall be compelled to fire upon you if you come too close," I warned them.

"Thoot —— out of them if they monkey with uth," said Middleton.

The new one was very tall and grim-looking, with long mustaches and a very large hat. He appeared to uncoil a long rope, and then showed his teeth in a snarling grin.

"Going to shoot that thing, *hombre?*" he asked, and I nodded emphatically.

"You know best," he answered. "Get all set, 'cause I'm coming to get you!"

He spurred his horse forward and sidewise, and just then I fired. I felt that I had wasted the shot, for I pointed where he had been. A terrific force seemed to crash into me, my lungs filled with smoke, and somewhere in my consciousness I seemed to hear a deafening explosion. Then I seemed to feel myself bouncing and sliding over the ground, only to stop with a grinding shock.

A still, small voice within me seemed to say:

"Pettingill, your sands of time are running low. A human being can stand only so much, and you've had your share."

And then I came back to life. I heard

voices, far, far away, and some one laughed. The laugh grated upon my nerves; it was as if some one had laughed aloud at a funeral.

"The barrel was dented two-thirds through and bent bad," stated a voice. "Wonder it didn't blow his fool head off instead of kicking —— out of him."

Then I sat up and looked around. I was propped against a rock. Around my chest and over my arms is a tightly pulled rope, and the other end of the rope is fastened to the front end of a saddle on a horse. Two men are standing near me, examining the remains of my shotgun.

Middleton is sitting near me, his hands and feet roped, and as I looked at him he vulgarly spat out through where a tooth had been, and winked at me. The two turned, and I saw upon the bosom of the taller one the badge of a police officer.

"I didn't think that Olaf had brains enough to go crazy," said the other. "Got to have some brains to start on, I reckon."

"Never can tell," nodded the tall one. "They caught him trying to put dynamite in the stove. He said he was going to blow up the law. Funny thing about it; somebody had filled his pants with bird-shot."

Just then we were interrupted by the coming of Ike and Dirty Shirt, leading the runaway horses. They stared at the strangers.

"Holy henhawks!" exclaimed Dirty. "They've roped our shepherds!"

"Uh-huh," nodded the tall one. "You might say a few words, Dirty."

"Hello, Adams," nodded Dirty to the other one. "Meet Professors Pettingill and Middleton. Gents, this person is Alcohol Adams. The tall one is Magpie Simpkins, the sheriff of Yaller Rock County. He's just as bad as he looks. Magpie, what you got ropes on them pelicans for? They ain't done nothing."

"Well, talk a little, can't you?" asked the Magpie person.

"Well—" Dirty Shirt rolled a smoke—"we tried our dangedest to fulfil our deputization, Magpie. These scientific pelicans pilgrim along, and we take 'em in. *Sabe?* They wants to know from personal experience whether it's sheep or just general wear and tear that puts a shepherd into that mental condition known as crazy.

"They've had a hard time, gents. They sure have herded in the interests of science. We've all had a hard time, Magpie, and I'm off sheep forever. If Scenery Sims and Alphabetical Allen wants them sheep rounded up, they'll have to do it themselves. *Sabe?* Law or no law, we're all done."

"So?"

The sheriff scratched his long nose, and began a silent laugh that shook his gaunt frame.

"Haw! Haw! Haw! You poor, locoed snake-hunters! Listen: I didn't no more than get started for Piperock when I meets Scenery and Alphy. They've done patched up their differences. We went over to notify you, but you never showed up. I've been looking for you."

"Haw!" replied Dirty Shirt vacantly. "You—uh— Say, who in —— owns the sheep we've been dry-nursing, Magpie?"

"I do," said Mr. Adams. "I had a Swede out here, but he went loco, I reckon, and tried to dynamite Scenery's camp, and——"

IKE stepped over and took the ropes off Middleton and myself.

"I met the driver of my grub-wagon," said Mr. Adams. "He had been drinking too much lately, I reckon. Said he was held up by twin devils, and that from now on he's through with booze or sheep."

We went down the hill, where Middleton and I recovered our coats. Dirty Shirt and Ike caught our mules and put on the packs. Then they gave us each a rope to lead with.

"The road over there will take you to Silver Bend," explained Ike.

We thanked him heartily, and then shook hands with them all.

"I hope you gents got the information you desired," said Magpie.

"Nothing like personal experience."

"Yeth, we got it," lisped Middleton. "We tholved it."

"I hope you didn't jump at it sudden-like," grinned Magpie.

"No, thir. Not thudden."

"I reckon it's a mistake to say that all shepherds are crazy," observed Magpie. "Cow-men use that expression more because they hate sheep than because the shepherd is loco. They figure that any

man is crazy who would herd sheep. *Sabe?*"

"What is your scientific opinion, gents? Do you think they're crazy?"

I looked at Middleton inquiringly, and he nodded.

"I will thupport you, Pettingill."

"Well," said I, "after personal observation, I will say this much: If he isn't crazy to begin with, and doesn't go crazy —he is a superman."

"Reckon the sheep are to blame?" asked Adams.

"Of courth," lisped Middleton, caressing his back, "the theep are primarily rethponthible, but I'd thay that the greater evil cometh from general wear and tear."

"Which goes to show that personal experience is better than hearsay," agreed Magpie.

"Ordinarily," I agreed, "but from now on I will be more than willing to take unsupported word for things I know nothing about. How about you, Professor Middleton?"

Middleton picked up his rope and spat through his vacant teeth.

"Oh, ——! Leth go, Pettingill. You thaid a mouthful."

WITHOUT RESERVATION

by Stanley Donaldson

A WHISTLE sharp from the darkness, the slack goes out of the train
And we hit her up over the switches, into the drivin' rain.
Clickity-clack and gainin', till the click is a steady pound,
And fainter the lights about us and fainter the fleein' ground
Till there's only a swayin' foot-hold with the square of the tank before,
Black like dread or devil-red as they swing the firebox door.
And so we cling in silence, watchin' the night rush by,
Two of us headed westward, "Curly the Vag" and I.

Money back on the cushions! I close my eyes and fi
Myself a-ridin' with them—the world on an even keel,
The world of the fairy story where the candy mountain's real
With credits that's always credits and a roll that'll never peel.
With Curly sittin' by me, him with a fancy eye,
And a pinch of coke or a four-bit smoke to while the minutes by.
Me in a chair all pretty, or pullin' my shoes for bed,
And never a thought for a minute of a couple of vags ahead.

And I close my eyes to see this and I open them up to see
Only the rain and the darkness leapin' to cut at me,
Or the crawl of the slack or the roarin' of a bridge we leap upon,
Demons out of the darkness racin' to beat the dawn.
So our string sweeps up the tangent or shrieks at an outer rail
And I cling and doze by Curly and watch the dim stars pale
Till the day blows up their peekin' and shines on another land.
Tickets? There's rust on my shoulder and the smell of iron on my hand!

The Peccaries

by Arthur O. Friel

Author of "The Sloth," "The Jaguar," etc.

PARDON me, *senhor*, but I think you are mistaken. Those peccaries which attacked you while you and your companions were exploring the headwaters of the Javary must have been those with the white lips and jaws, not those with the white band across their chests.

You say there was a big drove of them, and that they were large, black, and ugly. Yes, those surely must have been the white-lipped peccaries; for the white-collared pigs do not travel in such big bands, and they are not so large or so dark, nor so likely to attack a man if they are let alone. Those with the white chest-band, though, are dangerous and bad.

For that matter, all peccaries are wicked fighters if they are aroused, and it is best to avoid them if you can. But, bad as they are, they are not so bad as the cruel band of human Peccaries who, not long ago, ravaged the rubber-lands where I and other men employed by old Colonel Nunes were working. Perhaps you have heard of them. No?

Then I will tell you about them, while we sit safely here on the deck and the mighty Amazon bears us on toward our homes; and when you *senhores* arrive at last in your North America you will have one more tale to tell to the pale-faced folk who dwell in the cities, and use our rubber, and know nothing of the hardship and torment and death that go into the gathering of it.

It is an old saying among us Brazilians that "each ton of rubber costs a human life," and it is true—too true; for there is many a ton that means not only one death, but several. And the rubber which the Peccaries took from us was measured not by tons but by pounds, and it was stained red with our blood, and with theirs too.

These men were not the wild people of our own Brazilian jungle. They were wild and savage enough, it is true; but they came upon us from across the Javary, which, as you know, is the boundary between Brazil and Peru; and they were not merely *barbaros* who killed for the joy of fighting or because they ate human flesh, but an organized band of desperate men who hunted plunder in the form of rubber, or gold, or women, or whatever else they valued.

They were merciless, and were led by a yellow devil more pitiless than they. And nothing could stand before them until they met another band of human Peccaries, brought upon them by a man who escaped them after torment. I was that man.

We first heard of them from our fellow workmen down the river, who had the news of them from other men who brought supplies. We ourselves were toiling in a rubber district which was very rich, but very far out from headquarters, so that we had to go a long distance through the jungle at intervals in order to renew our food, which was brought up in boats to a large *tambo* where another of the *coronel's* gangs was working a number of good *estradas*.

On our trips to this *tambo* we always carried out with us some rubber to be sent down-stream, but there was much more of it which we left behind; for the journey through the bush was so long that it had been decided to pile up the rubber we made until the flood-time drew near, when a large band of men were to be sent in to take it away. So we had many balls of it, worth much money, waiting out there in the forest when we heard of the Peccaries.

Our friends told us the Peruvian side was being raided by a large band of marauders whose leader was a yellow half-breed, and who painted their jaws a whitish color like the white-lipped peccaries; and from this, and their savagery, they got their name. That was all that our men knew of them at that time. So we went back to our district, talking about this new peril of a region that is always perilous enough, but fearing it not at all; for none of us thought those robbers would ever come into our place, so far away from the hills of Peru.

NOW, as you have been among peccaries, *senhores*, you must know the fetid smell that comes from them, especially when there are many of them together. It comes from a gland in their loins, and if you kill one for his meat—which you probably will not do if you can find anything better—you must cut this thing out at once.

And one day some time after our trip outside, while we were lounging around the *tambo* in the heat of noon, this smell floated to us from the thick forest round about. It grew strong and rank in the heavy air, and we looked at one another and arose to get our rifles. But the beasts that burst out upon us were not what we expected.

A voice snarled an order, the bush rustled, and we were surrounded by a score of evil-looking men. They were Indians and half-breeds, almost naked, armed with rifles, revolvers and knives, and smelling most foul. We saw at once that they were Peruvian *caboclos*, for they had the slanting eyes and high cheek-bones. Then I grew cold inside, for I observed that their lips and jaws were daubed a dirty white; and that and their peccary-smell told me who they were.

Shots crashed out, and I turned to see two of my men fall dead, killed because they had seized their rifles. Then the yellow-faced, black-mustached leader of the raiders strode before me and snarled in Spanish—

"Who commands here?"

"I do," I snarled back.

He grinned a mocking grin, and said:

"Then, *señor el capitan*, tell your men to make no fight, or they will all go the way of those two dogs on the ground. We are the Peccaries—you know of us, yes? Then you know what we do to those who oppose us. But we would spare you for a time, because we can use you."

"For what?" I demanded.

"For beasts of burden, illustrious *señor*. You have much rubber, which will be carried out for us. And you will do the carrying."

As my rifle was not near my hand I leaped at him with my machete drawn. He sprang away from before me and hissed something through his yellow teeth. A sudden shock smote the back of my head, and I fell.

When I came to myself the fight was over, and of my eleven men only two were left alive. One was Jorge Tourinho, who was very ill with fever; and the other was Paulo Pereira, a big fellow who was very powerful but rather slow of thought and action. All the other nine lay where they had died fighting those devils who would not only rob us but enslave us too.

And though they had been outnumbered, surrounded, and caught by surprise, they had fought well, those mates of mine. Among their bodies lay those of six dead Peccaries, and four more of the raiders were shot and slashed so that they would soon die. The yellow leader, however, was unharmed, and as I started to rise he sprang and kicked me down. And then, grinning that cruel grin, he said:

"Stay where you are, dog, until I tell you to get up. And look around you and see what has come to your men. If I had not

decided to make you sweat blood before I finish with you, and so had you struck down from behind, you too would now be meat for the vultures, which are gathering for their feast."

And I looked up as I lay there, and saw that he spoke truth, for the black *urubus* already were settling into the trees around us.

Swiftly I rolled over and sprang up and attacked him again in fury—with my bare hands this time, for my machete was gone. I got his throat in my hands and throttled him. But another blow smashed on my head, and for the second time I was knocked senseless. And when the light came back to me I could not fight more, for I was sick—sick from a terrible headache caused by those blows, and sick because I had been brutally kicked in the stomach while I lay there.

And as I looked around I grew yet sicker from what I saw. For those *demonios* were mutilating the bodies of my comrades in a manner such as I can not tell you about, and such as only fiends could ever have thought of.

I looked at Paulo, who lay near me, and saw his face was gray-white. As I moved he caught my eye and said hoarsely:

"Do not fight more, chief, or they will do to us what they are doing to the dead—and do it while we are alive. Their yellow *capitão* has said so."

I made no answer, but my face may have shown my thought, for he added:

"Do not look so at me—I can not fight. See, my right arm is broken. And I was struck down from behind even as you were, and I am sick."

BEFORE I could say anything, if I had wanted to, a voice arose in a babble of meaningless words. The sound came from the *tambo*, where Jorge lay racked with fever, and I knew it was he, raving in his illness. The Peccaries turned and looked toward the noise, and the leader went to the hammock where Jorge lay.

"Ah! The fever?" he purred. "That is very sad, my friend, that you have fever. If you were well you might be a beast of burden for us, but you are far too weak to be useful. And since I am very tender of heart, and it grieves me deeply to see you suffering so, I will cure you at once."

Then Jorge's babbling burst into a sudden scream, and after that he was silent. And the yellow man came out grinning, and carrying a red-stained knife.

The foul-smelling *caboclos* laughed harshly at his murderous humor. A cold, deadly rage filled me. I ached to kill them all. Yet I saw how hopeless my position was, and swiftly determined what I would do. Though I would rather die fighting than be their pack-animal, yet I would not fight, nor die either; for if I were dead I would be of no use to myself or any one else, while if I lived and awaited my chance I might find a way to destroy this band, or at least some of them, and avenge my mates.

So when the chief murderer ordered me roughly to get up I did so meekly, though with some difficulty because of my aching stomach. And when he called me dog again, and told me that if I made more trouble he would cut out my bowels, I answered:

"I will make no trouble, *senhor*. You have won, and I am no fool. I fought for my rubber and my friends, and you can not blame a man for that."

"You have it right," he answered. "And you have sense also, and you are a good fighter. If you serve us well we may not treat you so badly. Perhaps you may even become one of us, for we need fighting men. If you do become a Peccary you shall have much gold, and women.

"But first we shall see how you act. If you try treachery, you will scream for death a long time before it comes to you."

"Gold and women?" I asked as if that bait tempted me. "Where do you get your women, *senhor*?"

He laughed then, a vile laugh, and stared at me with glittering eyes so evil that I secretly felt ashamed that any man should think of me what he thought. And he said:

"So you are interested, yes? We get the women wherever we find them. There are handsome maidens in the Indian villages here and there—yes, young and strong and beautiful—and when they have come to us they love us so much that they never leave us—until they die."

And he laughed again, cruelly; and the white-jawed men laughed too, so that I shivered, picturing to myself what the fate of those women must be. But I concealed my feelings, and when they ordered me to the rubber *tambo* I went, with Paulo trailing silently along behind.

There the Peccaries loaded themselves with the rubber, cursing and growling because there were not more men to carry it. They loaded me and Paulo, too, until we could scarcely walk under our burdens.

The yellow man scowled at Paulo's broken arm a minute before he was loaded up, and fingered his knife as if half-minded to kill him because he was crippled. But then he looked him all over, and saw how big and strong he was, and decided to keep him alive because he would be able to carry much weight when the broken arm should mend; so he had that arm tied up roughly with creeping vines.

When we had all we could carry the raiders took the weapons from the dead and hid them in the forest, where they could get them when they came again with more men. Then they started westward, driving us like beasts.

For two days we marched, Paulo and I plodding on silent and sullen. Paulo was suffering much from his broken arm, but our captors showed him no mercy. Because of this he soon developed a fever, and between this and his pain he could not sleep at night, but turned and groaned so that I could not sleep much either.

Of course, I did what little I could for him, and whispered encouragement, telling him we would live to repay these murderers for all they had done to us and our comrades. But he said:

"Chief, I shall not live. I feel that I shall see few more dawns, and I am glad."

And he was right. For whenever the band paused to drink from a stream they always let us drink first, and waited a while before taking water themselves, which puzzled us somewhat. And on the third day Paulo drank heavily from a little brook while I lay where I dropped to snatch a moment's rest, too tired even to creep to the water. And very soon after that he began to writhe and squirm, while the Peccaries looked at him with gleaming eyes and nodded to one another as if they had expected this.

I went quickly to him, and said—

"Comrade, what is it?"

He gasped—

"Poison!"

And soon he died in great pain.

I turned on those *caboclos* then and cursed them. But they only laughed, and the leader said:

"Why waste your temper? He was only a cripple. Do not curse us, but the Indians who poisoned the water because we took some of their women and made them happy. We have been very polite, and have always allowed you to drink first; is it not so?"

Then he cackled his hideous laugh, and I burned to kill him. But there was nothing I could do, and so I swallowed my hate and went on with them, trying to comfort myself with the thought that now Paulo was at peace.

WE REACHED a river, and they drew out canoes from concealments under the bank, and we went downstream for quite a long distance. Then we landed on the western shore, hid the canoes again and kept on westward.

Though I staggered on under my load like an unseeing brute, I was really using my eyes all the time and remembering our course, so that I could use it again by myself if the chance came. And at last, when it seemed I could go no farther, we came into a village which was the lair of the Peccaries.

It was a filthy little town with *barracãos* built much like ours, except that these houses did not stand high on poles as ours do; for the place was in hilly country, far above the reach of the floods. There were few men about, but quite a number of women—Indian women, all young, some not bad-looking, but all seeming sullen and hopeless. The men were as hard-looking and foul-smelling as those with us, and they had the same white-daubed jaws.

I soon learned from their talk with our leader, whom they called El Amarillo—probably because of his yellowness—that there were more robbers, but that they now were out on raids of their own, led by subchiefs. And during the next few days these bands came in, bringing some rubber, and a large amount of raw gold which they had won by murders somewhere in the hills.

In all, there were fully fifty of them, and I doubt if such a brutal crew ever was gathered before in any place. They were beasts—beasts that walked and talked like men, but had no human hearts.

Nobody paid much attention to me, except to curse me or throw vile jests at me, and see that I did not escape. This I made no effort to do, for two reasons: I was so

worn down by my hard march that I wanted rest above all else, and besides I hoped to work out some way to destroy them, which was really what I had undergone all that hardship for.

But I could see no way to do this, for I was one unarmed man among half a hundred cutthroats, and all I could think of was to set fire to their *barracãos* at night. This idea I discarded, for there was little chance that I could do them much harm by burning their houses. And so for the time I did nothing but watch and listen.

I saw that the rubber they had brought in from their raids was taken away again by a gang of stolid Indian porters, commanded by a villainous *caboclo* with one eye, who probably delivered it at some place where it could be sent to a market and sold.

I saw also why these men smelled so; for they killed peccaries in the forest, and ate their flesh, and smeared themselves with the musky fat from those pouches in the pigs' loins; and as they never washed themselves this odor quickly became most vile. Besides this, I saw something of their treatment of women.

As ten of them had died in the fight with my men, and all of them had had women, the Yellow One now decided to give these girls over to other men. He had them brought out and lined up before him like cattle, and picked the best-looking for himself, although he already had two others of his own. Then he gave each of his subchiefs one, and those who were left he handed over to men who had none.

The girls made no protest, but went dumbly with the men who got them—all except one. She was one of the youngest, and she turned from the bandit to whom she was given and begged El Amarillo not to make that man her master. He snarled, and told her to go as he ordered.

Then she broke away and fled very fast, trying to escape; and the big brute who now owned her ran after her, cursing. He caught her by the hair, and his knife flashed, and she fell; and then he picked her body up and threw it out to one side for the *urubus* and came back, muttering with rage.

The Yellow One grinned his beastly grin, and the others said nothing, but walked off as if such things were common. And I went away and sat down by myself, sick at heart.

SOON after that a dozen more Indian carriers came in, and the chief took them and me and four of his fighting-men, and we started back to my old *tambo* to bring out more of the rubber. Before we went the Yellow One ordered that large boats be kept waiting for us at that place on the river where we had first taken to the canoes, as several trips through the bush would be necessary to clean up all the loot.

At first it seemed strange to me that he should go back himself instead of sending a lesser man and devoting his own time to new work elsewhere. But as we marched back to the river I learned from his talk with his fighters that it was not alone the rubber that took him back, but that he planned another raid in my country, and a foul one.

For he was not satisfied with the three women he now possessed, but wanted more; and he knew of an Indian tribe who lived in the Brazilian bush in a great *maloca*, or tribal house, and who were lighter in color than most Indians and had among them many handsome young women. So, after our rubber should be all brought out and sent down the river, he intended to lead his men against this tribal house by night, when the Indians were asleep, burst in its single door, and, in the darkness and confusion of the sudden attack, to seize a number of girls and drag them swiftly away to a fate which I knew only too well.

I learned, too, from their talk that this would not be the first time they had assailed those Indians and carried off their women, and that in a previous raid they had captured, among other girls, the one whom I had recently seen murdered.

Now, though I had been unable to help that girl, because she had fled and met her death so swiftly that I could not interfere, I had noticed her particularly among the women, and had wondered whether she came from a certain tribe of Indians whom I knew. Some time before this I had roamed the jungle with a man from your North America whom I called the Jaguar, because he was a terrible fighter; and we had been captured by Indians said to be cannibals, but had not been killed and eaten by them because the Jaguar dared the chief to fight him barehanded, and killed him; and then a cunning old man who wished to use us for his own purposes made the

Jaguar chief of all the tribe, and finally we seized our chance and escaped.

And though we had been among those people only a short time, quite a number of their faces stayed dimly in my memory, and it seemed to me that the girl murdered by the big brutal Peccary had been among them. So now, when I heard this talk of a woman-stealing raid, I became sure that the tribe these men were about to attack was the same one which had held me prisoner.

And though those Indians meant nothing to me, the knowledge of what these beasts were scheming to do made my hatred for them all the more bitter; for it brought back to me burning memories of a time when I had a girl for whom I cared much, and lost her when she was carried away by a fiend even worse than the Peccary leader. And, brooding over this, and the deaths of my men, and the brutality from which I myself had suffered, I resolved that from this journey either El Amarillo or I would not come back.

We reached the river, and took the canoes up-stream, and resumed our march through the jungle. The Yellow One walked near me several times leering at me and calling me beast and dog, and taunting me with the fact that I should soon look upon the torn remnants of my brave comrades who had died fighting.

I bit my tongue and kept silence. But from the corner of my eye I studied his weapons, as I had done a number of times before. He carried a rifle in one hand, a machete and dagger at his left side, and a revolver at his right.

The thought of snatching one of these grew in my mind. I wanted one of the knives, which would do its work quickly and surely if I once got a grip on it; but somehow he always walked at my left, in such a way that the knives were on the other side of him and out of my reach.

The rifle, too, he carried usually in his left hand, and I knew that if I seized it there would be a struggle, and that probably one of the other Peccaries would kill me before I could wrench it from his grasp. Thus the revolver would be best, for I could get it more easily, and perhaps kill the other robbers with it as well as their leader. Whether the Indian carriers would attack me I did not know, nor care.

Then came my chance. The yellow man came up beside me once more—on the left, as before—and jeered at me, and stepped ahead. In a flash I swooped at the revolver, caught its butt, yanked it from his belt. He whirled like a cat. As he faced me I pointed at his body and pulled.

The hammer snapped down, but no explosion came. I pulled trigger again—and again and yet again. The weapon only clicked. It was empty.

Then, swift as a striking snake, the Yellow One's rifle-barrel hit my hand and knocked the revolver from it. And the Yellow One burst into a shrill, screeching laugh, and I saw I had been tricked.

I sprang at him. But he jammed his rifle into my stomach, stopping me in my tracks and knocking out my wind. Four men seized me and held me powerless.

"SO AT last you have come to life, my illustrious pack-animal!" he mocked me. "I have been testing you, waiting to see if you would not seize that unloaded weapon which I brought near your hand. You were so slow about it that I began to think you could be trusted to become a Peccary—but you bit at the bait, yes!

"And now do you remember what I told you, *señor*—that if you tried treachery you should scream for death long before it came to you? I see you do. And since my conscience is so tender that I could not rest if I failed to keep a promise, I am compelled to see that you receive what I pledged you."

Though I wrestled and kicked and bit, the men holding me dragged me to a big tree and held me there while their leader went into the bush seeking something. When he came back he carried a double handful of long thorns, as hard and sharp as nails.

At sight of these the other Peccaries chuckled as if they had seen them used before and knew what was to be done with me. More of them grasped me and held me against the tree so that I could not move at all. They twisted my hands up behind me and around the tree-trunk, and the Yellow One picked up the revolver he had knocked from my fist and held it by the barrel like a hammer. Then he stepped around the tree behind me. A moment later a sharp pain pierced one of my hands.

Yes, *senhores*, that is how I received these ugly scars on my hands and arms, at which

I have seen you glance more than once, though you were too polite to ask me about them. And these are not all, for there are other scars all down my body and legs, made in the same way. With those thorns the grinning Amarillo nailed me to that tree so that I hung in torment, unable to escape.

"There, *señor*, you will not have to carry any more burdens for us," he jeered when it was done. "You will have nothing at all to do but to hang here and scream curses after us when we are gone. When we come back we will let you watch us eat and drink, for you will have hunger and thirst by that time.

"Oh no, dear friend, you will not die before then, for I have been very careful not to break any large blood-vessels, which would let you die too soon. You will last for some days, unless a wandering jaguar should happen to find you. In that case—well, a jaguar must eat; is it not so?"

And all the Peccaries laughed. But I kept my jaws locked and made no sound. After watching me a minute he added:

"The thorns hurt, yes? That is very sad. Perhaps I can find something that will take your mind off the thorns for a few hours to come."

He went away again, and returned with a folded leaf. Keeping it closed, he shook it violently. Then he flipped it open and snapped it at me.

Out from it flew several ants, maddened by the shaking they had had—and they were the *aracaras*, the fire-ants whose bite gives keen pain that is felt for hours afterward. The instant they struck my body they bit me, and ran over me biting furiously, until I groaned in unbearable pain.

Then those beast-men laughed again harshly, and one of them went and caught a couple of *tucandeira* ants—those terrible black ones which are more than an inch long. He would have thrown these on me too, but the Yellow One struck them from him and destroyed them with his rifle-butt.

"Fool!" he snarled. "Bitten as this man is already, those black ants would kill him. Would you spoil all the enjoyment we shall have with him in the next few days?"

The man muttered something and turned away. And after spitting in my face the bandit chief turned away too, saying:

"We have more important things to do than to stay longer with you, you Brazilian dog. But we shall return, and then you shall have new things to think about."

And soon they were gone in the bush.

HOW long I hung there, *senhores*, I do not know. It seemed eternity. Burning with the torment of the fire-ant poison and the thorns and my wrenched and twisted muscles, I know I raved and screamed after those men had gone. I know, too, that if it had lasted much longer I should have gone stark mad, and that when the Yellow Man returned he would have found me only a yelling idiot. But before my mind gave way a new thing happened. Without a sound two men suddenly stood before me.

THEY were Indians. For an instant I took them for a pair of the Peccary porters who had sneaked back to torture me anew. But then I saw that they were lighter in color, their faces were shaped differently, and they carried big bows.

They were men of the cannibal tribe in the big *maloca* where I had once been assistant chief, and their faces showed that they knew me. They had little love for me, I felt, for when the Jaguar and I had been among them we had killed their chief and five others of their men. Still, a quick death at their hands would be a mercy to me now; and as I had learned some of their language during the time I spent among them, I begged them either to kill me or set me free.

They grunted to each other, and one asked me how I had come there, nailed to that tree. I made them understand that a band of human Peccaries had left me there. At once they flew into a rage, and I knew my guess had been right, and they were of the tribe whose women the beast-men had stolen.

They gritted their teeth, and beat their chests, and acted as if about to start off in pursuit. But I managed to tell them they were much outnumbered, and their foes had firearms, and so they must have more men before attacking the bandits.

They scowled, but talked it over between them and agreed that I was right. And then they laid down their bows and set to work taking out the thorns.

Though they were wild, fierce fighting-men of the jungle and eaters of human flesh, they handled me as gently as they

could; and when the thorns were out they laid me down and brought me water in big leaves, and gave me to drink. They did even more; they got certain herbs from the forest, and crushed them, and placed them on my wounds; and before long the cruel pain of those hurts grew less, so that I could lie still and not twist and writhe. Then they swiftly made a crude bed of branches and vines and leaves, and put me on it, lifted it, and started straight away through the bush.

They marched a long time—so long that once when they paused to drink I asked them what they had been doing so far from their village. They said they were hunters, and had been following a tapir's track. Then they lifted me and were off again.

It was nearly night when our journey ended at a cleared place, in which stood a great round house about forty feet high, its sides made of palm-trees and its roof of palm-leaves—the *maloca* where my rescuers and some two hundred other Indians made their home. There my carriers laid me down and left me while they crept through the one low door of the house to report to their chief.

Men and women and children crowded around me as I lay there, and I thought how different was my first arrival among them. Then I had come fighting, hating and despising them as eaters of men.

Now, after what I had just gone through, they seemed friends and decent people; for I knew they ate only their enemies, and that the eating was due not so much to savagery as to some obscure religion; and I knew also that they washed themselves daily, and that a man who allowed himself to stink like the Peccaries would quickly be punished or banished. I saw, too, that they seemed sorry for me in my present condition, and felt that they would be kind to me. And it was so.

Soon the hunters came out again, and with them their chief and two lesser chiefs, painted red and black, and wearing blue and red feathers bound on their heads, shoulders, and loins. The chief, who was a powerful young fellow, I did not remember; but one of the sub-chiefs was the crafty old man who once had saved my life, and the only one in all the tribe who spoke any words of my language.

This old man looked at me and nodded and talked to the other two. And I was lifted again by the hunters and carried in through the little door and put in a hammock, where women soon brought me a gourd of broth that strengthened me much. And then I told my tale to the head men of the tribe.

They listened in grim silence, except when I told of the murder of the young girl. Then a growl ran among the men around me, and the three chiefs snarled in rage. When I was through I felt sick, and my wounds burned again, and I gave no more attention to the chiefs or any one.

But soon an old woman came with two younger ones, and they put a thick, dark liquid on my injuries which stung like fire for an instant, but which soon eased my pain wonderfully; and then they gave me a drink of some sweetish stuff, and before long I fell into a deep sleep.

WHEN I awoke the sun was glaring down through the big smoke-hole in the roof, and women were cooking at their little fires scattered through the *maloca*. At once I was offered food by the old woman, and as I ate it I noticed that the tall young chief was gone.

The old sub-chief was there though, and he came and sat by me and told me that the Peccaries already were being hunted down. The big chief and twenty of his best fighters, with the two hunters to guide them, had taken the trail at the first light of dawn. He added with a frightful grin that tomorrow much peccary-meat would be eaten here, and that if I did not care to taste it I should have the head of the Yellow One to kick about when my legs healed.

He was not quite right; for the wild men were gone two days instead of one, and when they came they did not bring the head of the yellow *demonio* nor any other part of him. But they did bring with them the hands and feet of all the rest of that brutal gang—even those of the Indian carriers.

They had ambushed the raiders in the act of carrying my *coronel's* rubber to their boats, and in a swift fight had killed them to a man—except the leader. How that cunning devil had escaped they did not know; he had been there, and then he was not there, and they could find no trace of him after that.

They were angry over this, and all the more so because before he disappeared he shot three of their mates; and the chief

asked me to tell them the way to the headquarters of the Peccaries in Peru, so that he could lead a war-party there before the Yellow One should bring his men to attack their *maloca* with their guns and bullets. This I could not do—I tried, but they could not understand me well. So then I told them that as soon as I could travel again I would lead them there myself, and we would kill all the Peccaries in their own homes.

At once he became more cheerful, and promised to make me strong as quickly as possible; and he gave orders to the old woman who seemed to know so much about curing hurts, and she nodded. Then everybody prepared for a great feast to celebrate the victory they had already won.

All the men, and the women too, painted themselves anew with curving stripes of black and red, and the chiefs put on their finest feathers and squirrel-tail belts, and the others wore necklaces of the teeth of animals. The women took the hands and feet brought back by the fighters, and stripped the flesh from the bones, and fried it in tapir-lard or boiled it in reddish pots.

Much monkey-meat also was cooked, and parrots, and fish and other things; and all that day there was much eating and drinking, and a sort of ceremony that I could not understand and did not try to. They offered me none of the man-meat, and I was glad, for it angers those people to refuse any of their food. I ate some monkey, and then tried to sleep and forget what they were doing.

For days I lay there while my hurts healed—and they did heal with surprising swiftness. For the old woman was by me day and night, brewing different things in jars over a little fire and putting some of them on my injuries and giving me others to drink; and I grew strong and well much faster than I could have done otherwise.

While I was recovering the Indians were not idle. Some got plants with blue blossoms and small pods and yellow roots, and crushed the roots into pulp, and went away into the jungle; and the old sub-chief told me that with that root-pulp they were poisoning all the streams for a long distance around, except those which they themselves used.

Others went out and made man-traps, such as pits and spring-guns, to kill any one approaching the *maloca*. And those who did neither of these things worked on their weapons, fitting new cords to their great bows, or fastening barbed sting-ray bones on three-pronged spears, or testing the sharp jaguar-teeth set in big war-clubs, or dipping arrows and blow-gun darts into that brown poison which swiftly paralyzes and kills anything scratched by it.

And while this went on the young war-chief sat with me at times and had me tell him about the Peccary village, so that he could get a clear picture of it in his mind and know what to do when we should reach it.

THEN came the time when I was whole again. I asked for weapons, and the war-chief gave a command, and men brought in all the guns and cartridges and knives taken from the Peccaries they had killed. From these I took the best rifle, and two revolvers, and cartridges, and a machete.

I tried to have other men take the rest of the guns, but the chief would not have it so; for he said they were not skilled in the use of such weapons, and would do the expedition more harm than good with them. They did take the knives and machetes, however, for these they could use. And that night we all slept early, for we knew we had before us a long, hard journey with a death-struggle at the end of it.

Before we slept, though, the fighting-men painted themselves once more. I noticed that this time they added a new stripe—a broad whitish curve around their chests and collar-bones; and from the way they grinned at it I thought they were not used to it. So I asked the old man what it meant, and learned it was a savage joke.

Since the Yellow One's band painted themselves like the white-lipped peccaries, he said, the wild men would make themselves peccaries of the other kind—those with the white collars; and they would soon show that their teeth were sharper than those of the stinking pigs of the hills.

At dawn we were up and away. There were fully sixty of us, all hard, relentless men. I would have turned northward, whence I had come, but the war-chief shook his head and led the way straight to the west. When we should reach the river, he told me, we should find there the Peccaries' own boats, which the Yellow One had intended for carrying away my rubber, but which now had been brought up-stream

for us. And when I asked about this he said he had sent men to get the boats, and that they would not fail.

I found that he spoke truth; for when we did reach the river there were the boats with a dozen more wild men in them—and with blood-stains on the wood which showed what had become of the Peccary boatmen.

Though we filled those boats dangerously full, we went down the stream swiftly. Neither on the water nor on the Peruvian shore did we meet any man, nor even on our way through the hills to the lair of the beastly men-pigs. It seemed that they never suspected Brazilian Indians would come against them or could find their place.

Still, we went quietly and carefully, lest we either fall into a trap or allow our enemies to learn we were coming. When at last we did come upon one of the guards they always kept out we were traveling so silently that he did not hear us at all.

I saw him first, for I was the guide; and I recognized him as one of those who had thrown filthy insults at me when I was a prisoner there. Hot with the memory of those things, I lifted my rifle.

But the chief, at my heels, caught my arm and shook his head; and I read his thought—that the explosion of the cartridge would be heard. So I lowered the gun, and he whispered something to those behind.

A bowman crept up to us. His cord twanged. A war-arrow whirred. A gasping groan broke from the outlaw, and he fell on his face. We moved forward again.

Soon after that I halted, and told the chief we now were near the village. As I have told you, I had described this place to him before we started, and he knew there were three trails to it—one from the east, where we were now; one from the north, by which the robbers' loot was taken out to some market; and one from the southwest, which they often used in starting on a raid toward the high mountains. Each of these trails was always guarded.

I knew the chief planned to attack from all three trails at once as well as from the thick jungle around the clearing where the *barracãos* stood; so that now it was necessary to creep around the town, kill the outposts on the other two trails, and arrange the warriors so that all could sweep into the place at the same time.

It was late in the day, but there would be time to attack before darkness dropped on us; and the chief quickly divided his forces into three parties. One, which he would lead himself, was to go to the northern trail; another, under the younger sub-chief—for the old sub-chief, unfit for fighting, had stayed at home—would take the southwestern path; and the third division would remain with me.

TWO orders were given—that no man should attack until the chief himself began the fight; and that if the Yellow One was there he must not be killed, but taken alive. For an instant I was angered by that last command, for I had long thirsted to repay that yellow devil for what he had done to me and my mates.

But then I saw the hard gleam in the chief's eyes, and knew that what I might do to that Peccary would be merciful compared to what the Indian intended. So I determined that neither I nor any other man should kill him quickly if I could help it.

The chief and the sub-chief went their ways, and we crept forward on our own path. Before long we heard sounds of life that told us we were almost at the edge of the clearing; and after I spied ahead and found the end of the trail clear I sent my men into the bush. Most of them were bowmen and blow-gun men, and I gave them no orders, knowing they well understood what they were to do—stretch out along the edge of the jungle and be ready for action.

Those who were clubmen and spearmen stayed with me—six of them, each powerful enough to crush the life out of two ordinary men. The spearmen stripped the grass sheaths from the points of their weapons, and I saw that each of the terrible barbs was dark with poison. To them I gave one command: that they walk last, with the spear-heads turned backward. And then we slipped up to the clearing and waited.

The Peccary lair was on a hillside, and our path ran along that hill, so that we now were lurking at a point about opposite the center of the town, with houses above us and below us. We could see into the middle of the place, where stood the *barracão* of the Peccary chief; and we saw that the men of the bandit gang were gathered at that house.

Then, in the darkness of the doorway I,

spied the sickly yellow face of the man who had nailed me to the tree and who now, no doubt, was putting some fresh deviltry into the heads of his followers. And for the first time since my comrades and I had smelled those peccaries in the bush, *senhores*, I laughed as I thought that even while that merciless band plotted more murder and torment, death was creeping silently around them, and the fate they planned for others soon would burst upon themselves. And the savages, understanding, grinned back at me a sharp-toothed grin of death and hate.

The time dragged. We knew that in the forest around the clearing our men were slipping into their places, that the guards on the other trails were dying or dead, that we should soon spring out on our enemies. But it seemed that night would come before we moved. I could feel my heart pounding as if it would break my ribs, and hear the wild men grind their teeth with the lust for battle, though they made no other sound or movement.

And then the waiting ended. From the north rose a deep, roaring yell—the war-cry of the chief.

Instantly a rain of arrows whizzed into the Peccaries grouped at the *barracão*. And as they yelped and jumped under the shock, and some fell dead, out from the northern forest burst the fighting-chief and his spearmen, and up from the southwestern trail rose the shrill yell of the sub-chief's men breaking cover.

My own six savages surged forward; but I sharply ordered them back and opened fire with my rifle. I shot fast, but I shot straight, and at each explosion a Peccary staggered and fell.

And then, dropping the rifle, I drew my two revolvers. And with a frightful roar my men dashed forward with me.

As we ran a burst of arrows and poisoned darts whirred around us and over us into the bandits. And as we ran we saw that most of the Peccaries were running also—running for their rifles—though some stood and shot with their revolvers. Already the ground was littered with dead, and more than one of those who ran for guns never lived to use them, because of the poisoned blow-gun darts that had struck them.

And now behind us and all around us rang the screeches of the bowmen, who came charging to closer quarters, lest they hit their own men closing in. The air was full of yells of hate, cries of fear, screams of dying men, the snarl of arrows ripping into bare flesh and the smashing reports of guns.

SHOOTING with both hands, I ran straight for the *barracão* of the Yellow One, who had suddenly disappeared. A few men who still stood in our path and answered my fire went down quickly. Others, terrified by the ferocious charge of my clubmen and the long spears, fled from our path.

So fast did we run that we reached that *barracão* just as the Yellow One came bounding out of it with a rifle. He shot instantly, and one of my wild men coughed and fell dying. Then I leaped at him, dropping my revolvers, and caught him by the throat so savagely that he went down, losing his rifle in the fall.

As we struck the ground I clamped my legs around his hips so that he could not draw his revolver or knife, and then I sank my fingers deep in his throat. Surprize and fear flashed across his face as he recognized me.

Then he squirmed like a snake and fought like a jungle-cat, so that I had all I could do to keep my grip. But I kept it, and as I crushed the breath from him I forgot the chief's orders and my own resolve not to kill this man. I throttled him, *senhores*, until his face was black and his struggles grew weak. And then I remembered, and let go, and started to rise.

His right hand went to his revolver. But I grabbed one of my own revolvers from the ground and struck him on the head with it. He fell back senseless.

Swiftly I disarmed him, and looked about for something to tie him with. Finding nothing, I bounded into his *barracão*, where his three women were huddled in a corner in fright; and there I found ropes, and ran out again, and bound him so that he could not move when he should get his senses back, and dragged him to the side of the house and threw him down there. And then, with his revolver and my own, reloaded, I turned back to the fight.

By this time the battle was raging all over the village. Near me stood the war-chief, roaring his war-cry to his men; and around him a little knot of clubbers, spearmen, and blow-gun men were rushing back and forth,

killing Peccaries as the chance came, but never going far from their leader.

But now a solid group of Peccaries came charging straight toward me, probably intending to free the Yellow One. The chief and his men sprang into their path. Shots cracked out in a ripping volley, and several of the wild men fell. Then the Peccaries closed in on them with swinging machetes.

The spearmen drove their weapons into the bellies of some and tore them out again. The clubmen attacked with terrible blows, their tooth-studded bludgeons smashing men's heads and tearing out their brains. The chief himself swung one of those clubs, and I saw him crush the skulls of four men. The blow-gun men seized machetes from fallen foes and slashed throats open with them. And I stood where I was, snapping a bullet into any Peccary I could hit without shooting one of my Indian friends. It was a bitter fight, and a fast one. Soon the charging Peccaries were only mangled corpses.

Then I knew the fight was won. For the crash of gun-fire died out, and only a few scattered shots cracked out here and there as some cornered wretch fired his last bullet and went down under club or arrow.

Then from all around rose the exulting yells of the savages. And suddenly the sun dropped behind the mountains, and darkness swept around us.

Somewhere a man set fire to a *barracão* and quickly the others burst into flame. By the red light the wild men dragged the bodies of the dead bandits into a heap, and attended to their own hurts, and brought all the women before the chief. And there we found that one of the Yellow One's three women was a girl of this same Indian tribe—a girl who once might have been handsome, but who now looked thin and old from the abuse he had given her. In her own language, which I did not understand very well because she spoke fast, she told the chief her story; and the Indians growled and hissed as they heard her and glared at the Yellow One, who now had his senses back and lay with his yellow face a very pale yellow indeed. But the chief ordered that no man touch him, and set me and a clubman over him as a guard through the night. And you may be sure, *senhores*, that we gave him no chance to escape.

Once in the night El Amarillo asked me in a whining tone what would be done with him. This I did not know, but I did not tell him so. I told him to remember what he had done to me and to others, and that he would be well repaid for all his kindness to helpless prisoners.

At the thought of enduring himself what he had done to those in his power he groaned and squirmed and struggled to break the ropes. When he tired of that he offered me much gold if I would free him. I ordered him to be quiet, or I would make him so. And he said no more, though he tried again and again to loosen his bonds as the night wore away.

AT SUNRISE the ropes were taken from him, and he stood up in a circle of Indians, and the chief sat and looked at him with eyes hard with hatred. And whether he was desperate with fear and hoped to anger the chief so that he would be killed at once, I do not know; but he began to sneer and boast. The woman who had been his and who was of this tribe repeated what he said, so that all the wild men understood.

He boasted of his evil deeds, of robbery and murder and worse, and called himself King of the Peccaries, who feared no man. If he sought quick death he came near getting it, for the savages, hating him bitterly already, were maddened by this. But the chief spoke sharply, and nobody touched him. And then the chief answered him.

"So you are King of Peccaries!" he said. "We shall see whether peccaries know you for their king."

He laughed then with all his pointed teeth, and we wondered. Not even his own men knew what he meant. But he said no more to the Peccary, but turned to me and asked me what I would like to do with that man.

And thinking of Paulo and his broken arm and of my own toil under a burden, I replied that I should like first to drive him many miles under a heavy load and make him "sweat blood." He grinned again, did the chief, and said it should be so.

When he understood that he was to be made a beast of burden the Yellow One snarled and tried to fight. He only got himself a terrible thrashing. The *barbaros* beat him with the flat sides of machetes until he could hardly stand. Then they looked about for something to load him with.

The Indian girl came forward again and told us that under his burned *barracão* was buried gold which his gangs had brought in from raids. And since gold is very heavy, and also because it pleased them to load him with the yellow dirt for which he had committed so many crimes, the wild men forced him to dig up his treasure, and made rough bags from the scanty clothing of the dead Peccaries, and lashed them on him with ropes and vines.

And they got large balls of rubber which had been scorched in the burning of the town, and fastened these on him too, until he was bent far over by the weight—as Paulo and I once had been. Then they drove him eastward toward their own land.

Before we departed, though, the chief proved himself a wise young man as well as a good fighter. For instead of forcing all the women to come with us he told them they might go wherever they wished, and make their way back to their own people if they could. I saw he understood a thing which some men never learn—that a woman taken and kept against her will is not worth taking, because she will surely make trouble when she can.

And so the women did as they pleased. Some came with us, but more took weapons from the dead men who had been their masters and went away in a band, seeking their own homes.

And then, with two wild men yanking the Yellow One along by a rope around his neck and others jabbing him from time to time with machetes, we men from Brazil took the trail by which we had come.

In the next few days El Amarillo learned what it meant to be a pack-animal. He carried that load at all times; he slept with it on him at night, and was never free from it for an instant.

And he carried more than that—the weight of the death and misery and agonized curses of the men he had tortured and killed for that rubber and gold, and the knowledge that for him there was no escape, and the terror of the unknown death that finally should come to him. And that, *senhores*, was all of my own revenge on him—driving him like a beast. In what came to him later from the wild men I had no hand.

As we went down the hills to the river, and up the river in the boats, and on through our own jungle, all of us remembered the chief's puzzling words about the peccaries knowing the Yellow One for their king; but none of us knew what he meant by them, and he did not tell us. The only time he spoke of peccaries was soon after we started, when he ordered his men to watch for the wild pigs on their hunts—for of course we had to hunt as we went, and kill game to eat.

Twice there came hunters who told him they had found peccaries in the bush, and then he asked what they were; and when the men said they were few and white-collared he shook his head. So most of us saw none of the pigs until we were nearing the *maloca* and the long march was nearly done.

THEN came men hurrying through the forest and told their chief they had sighted a herd of the white-lipped peccaries. At once he gave orders to a number of others, and they went into the bush with the hunters who had seen the pigs. He also called two more savages, and I saw they were the same ones who had found me hanging in torment; and after a word from him they went into the bush by themselves.

With a knife he then cut the ropes around the Yellow One, and the gold and rubber fell from him. He had been bent under that crushing weight so long, *senhores*, that when it dropped he dropped also, falling forward, unable to keep his balance. But he was up again soon, rubbing himself and scowling at the savages. Fear showed in his eyes, though, as he glanced around him.

And when the two wild men came back and gave something to the chief the Peccary glanced at it, and his face turned sickly white. I looked too, and my recently healed wounds seemed to burn again as I saw what the chief held—a handful of those terrible long sharp thorns.

With a yell of terror the bandit sprang away and tried to dash into the jungle. But men caught him, threw him down hard, and dragged him to a tree. And there, faced at last by the fate he had made more than one victim suffer, he screeched and whined and sniveled for mercy—the mercy he had never shown to his prisoners.

It did him no good. The wild men only growled in disgust, while their chief stood before him holding the thorns for him to look at. I shivered, *senhores*, but I could do nothing for him even if I tried; they might seize me and nail me up again too,

for those people are easily angered, and their anger is deadly.

Then the chief ordered all but those who held the yellow man to climb trees. And while we climbed he fastened the Yellow One's hands to the tree—yes, only his hands; he did not use the thorns elsewhere on him. Then the chief himself and the other men followed us into the branches, so that nobody except the evil Peccary remained on the ground.

Shouts came to us, and the sound of bodies crushing through the tangled forest, and the grunts of pigs. Soon a huge white-lipped peccary trotted out, followed by others. From his perch in the tree over El Amarillo the chief bellowed at the animals, and the first ones stopped, looking around them, while the rest of the herd came running in from the bush until more than forty of them were crowded under us.

The chief roared again, and answering calls came from the hunters he had sent out to drive the beasts here. We heard sounds of climbing, and knew they too were taking to the trees. And then the chief spoke to the man below him, at whom the pigs were staring wickedly.

"Here are peccaries. Show them you are king. Make them take out the thorns!"

The Yellow One broke into horrible cursing. He howled the vilest words I ever listened to, raving until froth was on his mouth. And he kicked out at the stinking pigs.

His voice and his movements maddened them. Suddenly they surged at him.

They took out the thorns, *senhores*.

The weight of their charging bodies tore him from the tree. He fell, screaming. But so thick were the beasts about him that he fell not on the ground but on their backs, and fought to his feet again. Yet when he had risen he could not escape; he was wedged among them and knocked back and forth.

Squealing with rage, the devil-pigs seemed to boil up around him, climbing on one another's backs and leaping upward to strike. With their knife-edged teeth they chopped and slashed his body and arms and legs into ribbons.

Then he went down again, and rose no more. His body was thrown on the heaving mass as it was struck again and again by the furious animals. Then it rolled down among them, and his ghastly yellow face disappeared.

LONG after he was dead the peccaries tore him and trampled him into the dirt. And other pigs dashed at the gold-bags made from Peccary clothing, and ripped those also into tatters, and scattered the gold all about.

Some leaped up against the trees where we perched, their vindictive black eyes fixed on us and their teeth clashing together. But as we made no move, but only stayed beyond their reach, they soon abandoned us.

And at length, grunting among themselves, they all moved slowly away, their white lips now stained deep red, and leaving behind them only a torn thing that had been a man, fragments of cloth that had held gold and their own disgusting smell.

We came down again. The savages fell into line and started away as if nothing had happened. But I felt sick, and I wanted to see no more of these men. So I told the chief that now I would leave him and go back to my own people and tell them how he and his brave fighters had destroyed the foul pig-men of the hills.

He nodded, pointed the way I should go and strode away. And without a farewell word or a backward look the whole band of wild men passed on into the forest, and I was left alone.

So, *senhores*, that is the tale of the Peccaries. Up in the hills of Peru the vines are creeping across the place where once stood their village, and where now remain only sodden ashes and scattered skulls. Out in the pathless land beyond the farthest rubber-workings, where only wild men and wild animals prowl, lie the bones of their leader and the blood-stained gold he gathered.

And soon the great green jungle, which has swallowed many better men, will blot out every trace of them, and only their evil name will live on for a little time at the headwaters of the Amazon, to die out at last and be forgotten. For that is the way of the jungle.

The Weight of Reputation

by Harrison R Howard

Author of "Afraid of the Bar," "Partnership," etc.

FEW are they, leading active lives, who have not learned the great truth that difficulties and dangers appear far more forbidding in the advancing future than in the immediate present. Paradoxically, distance exerts a magnifying influence. Men look ahead to untoward events with fear or misgiving, only to find when the events take place that they can be met gracefully and with equanimity. Fore-fear is the very madness of fear; the leaven of imagination raises it out of all just proportion.

Ranger Elmer Randolph of the old Forest Service had not learned this truth—simply because he had never permitted danger to get out of the distance and close to him. He had viewed it at a distance times without number, but there his relation with it ceased; and he had never had opportunity of comparing its appearance afar with its appearance at close hand—the only method by which one may discover the great truth.

From which it must not be assumed that Ranger Randolph was a coward. Indeed, he did not possess so much as the fundamentals of cowardice. Simply he was cautious. He gracefully sidestepped difficulties; dangers he rode around; diligently he pursued the lines of least resistance. In the popular phrase, he very carefully observed his footing.

Now in a more modern day, in the quiet functioning of an established and efficient—if not wholly effective—Service, Ranger Randolph would doubtless have achieved modest success and in the fulness of time would have been promoted to District Ranger or perhaps to the soft cushions of a luxurious office in San Francisco or Portland. But in the riotous old days when the Service was still in the very hell of birthpangs and opposition to it was various and lusty, the pioneers who bore its idealistic though tattered banners had to be men of pertinacity rather than tact, eager to carry out its principles to the last syllable no matter at what personal hazard.

Therefore like all those born before their time Ranger Elmer Randolph was a square peg in a round hole; and when, at the fag end of a beautiful August day, he tracked his quarry to a homestead in a pine clearing he did not attempt to carry the stronghold by heroic measures, but seated himself in a safe thicket at the clearing's edge and calmly waited for darkness.

When the dim, last-quarter moon slipped above the tips of the encircling pines, Randolph unstrapped his hand-ax from the saddle of his mount and cut several light hazel boughs which he bound securely together. The foliage of the completed whole was intended to furnish a screen behind which he could not be seen, and which was light enough to be easily pushed forward along the ground from a prone position behind it.

He circled the cabin thrice before he decided upon the most effective and protective sector of attack. He determined finally upon the north wall, from which

approach he could command a view of the front doorway which would prove of tactical benefit in the event that the miscreant attempted a dash for the open.

He dragged the screen to a position opposite the north wall of the structure, pushed it cautiously out into the open, and dropped on hands and knees behind it. He crawled slowly forward, pushing the boughs ahead of him.

The northern approach to the dwelling possessed other virtues as well as that of commanding the front entrance. For one thing the ground was broken here and there by detached growths of small shrubs, and his mobile bough-screen should not be so readily detected among them as upon the bare earth of the other points of approach. He crawled on with extreme caution, keen to the fact that the success of his expedition depended upon intriguing the watcher within the house into considering the screen as one of the stationary growths about him.

Ranger Randolph knew the house well. During the preceding Winter he had been a constant caller at the White homestead, sitting through the stormy evenings before the big fireplace pursuing a courtship of Florence White, the daughter of the house.

He felt a positive sense of satisfaction at the knowledge that the Whites were not at home. The Homestead Law permitted settlers to absent themselves from their holdings for a portion of each year, and the White family had gone to the distant city where Florence was attending a school of stenography.

He was quite content that his pursuit of the present task was unobserved by any of his acquaintances. Disrepute had already attached itself to his name in the district. He was far from approving his method; he knew that the limited traditions of the Service which tolerated his membership demanded more rigorous treatment; he should have taken his chance at storming the stronghold without waiting for the protection of darkness. He was thoroughly glad that Florence White was far away from home.

Half-way to the northern wall of the building the shrubs ended, and with added caution he pushed out beyond. Inch by inch the screen advanced before him. He thought he detected movement in the window and quickly ceased his progress. After a time he gave the screen a tentative push; then with the suddenness of a thunderclap flame spurted from a rifle-barrel at the window.

Randolph halted and crouched low. Another flash illuminated the clearing and another ball tore with a whine through the hazel boughs. Fifty yards separated him from the near wall of the house. He realized that by all that was sacred to the Service he should make a dash for it.

HAD he acted upon impulse the task would probably have been easily performed; but he hesitated, considering the prospect. His ready imagination conjured up a lurid and forbidding picture of flame and shot; he was appalled by the possibilities of the situation for dire results. He accepted this imagined estimate of the possible danger as accurate—he had never learned the great truth.

His habit of caution asserted itself at once, and he sprang to the nearest clump of shrubs, thence to another and so on until he gained once more the protecting shelter of the pines. He paused a moment for breath and to consider how very grateful he was for Florence White's absence.

He made his way to his waiting horse and led the animal over soft ground so that the quarry might not detect his retreat. When he had gone a safe distance he swung to the saddle and urged the mount at top speed toward town.

As he swayed through the sharp night air to the stride of the animal he repeated to himself that there were other, more effective, methods of accomplishing his end; he could obtain help in town. The quarry would not dare leave the cabin for fear of ambush. With assistance he would be comparatively easy to take; he could not well sustain a defense of the house when attacked from two or more sides. Why risk his neck, the ranger considered, when it could be done with positive ease and safety?

He found his superior, the district ranger, in the little room behind his office, preparing for bed. As he listened to Elmer's report he swore beneath his breath and said not a word, though an expression of disgust, not unmingled with pity for the young ranger, came upon his face. He saddled his horse at once and the two

plunged back along the dark trail through the timber.

A light shone in the open space as they approached the White clearing, and when they had reached the edge of the pines they discerned an illuminated lamp through the window of the White's living-room. The district ranger dashed his horse across the clearing to the door, Randolph perforce following, tense with the expectation of a fusillade.

The superior sprang from his horse and revolver in hand flung open the heavy door. From his saddle Randolph caught a swift, familiar glimpse of the Whites' living-room with the big table in the center surmounted by a green-shaded reading-lamp. About the table sat the White family.

Elmer swung weakly to the ground. The Whites rose and came to the door.

"He made a break for it half an-hour ago," the head of the house explained in answer to the district ranger's question. "He'd never have got in, only he took me by surprize. When he left he got away with one of my horses. I thought sure your ranger would nab him."

The flood of light from the reading-lamp sweeping through the open doorway revealed the district ranger's flushed countenance.

"The ranger came on into town after me," he replied quietly; then after an awkward silence swung back to his saddle.

Elmer stood by his animal watching the face of Florence White. She was regarding him from sad eyes that bore the same quality of pity as that which he had discerned in the district ranger's expression when he had made his report. Randolph winced. He knew with complete certainty that he could never again hope to make her believe that what almost every one else in the district was saying of him was untrue.

He swung disconsolately to the saddle. White and the district ranger were conversing in lowered tones. The girl emerged from the doorway and slowly approached.

"I finished my course and graduated, Elmer," she said by way of greeting.

Randolph nodded.

"I didn't know you'd returned. Can I—may I call out some evening?"

She regarded him a moment in silence; then shook her head.

"I think not, Elmer. I—I'm afraid I've been wrong in my estimate of you. You see, when that man left the house dad wanted to interfere, but I wouldn't let him. I was sure you wanted no help. I—I guess other folks knew you better than I did, but I wouldn't believe them—before. I'm sorry, Elmer!"

The two Service men rode back to town in silence. Randolph went directly to his quarters; the district ranger lingered in the office to write a letter to headquarters requesting Elmer's transfer to another district. He mentioned no reasons for the request; he bore no animosity. The young fellow would probably prove up all right in a quieter, more established district.

Two weeks later Elmer's transfer came. The district ranger read the missive—and quickly reread it. Then he began to laugh. For a quarter of an hour, at short intervals, laughter welled up in his throat. Elmer had been ordered to the wildest, most outlaw district in the department.

The district ranger's sense of humor was inordinately stimulated. After long reflection he wrote a letter to an influential and gossipy acquaintance at Elmer's new post. He laughed and smiled alternately as he penned the screed. He knew that the letter would be shown all about. It should prove a rare joke.

The new ranger, he explained in the letter, was a hard-bitten individual. He advised any lawless elements operating counter to the forest laws to mend their ways with dispatch.

Ranger Elmer Randolph was decidedly a bad egg, a fighter before the hat had a chance to drop, a proper gunman, a sensational go-getter. He couldn't commence to count the notches on this remarkable young ranger's gun. It was his earnest opinion that the famous Black Creek district was sure due for a gosh-awful clean-up!

WHEN Ranger Elmer Randolph arrived at his new post he was more than a little disconcerted to find a welcome awaiting him. He discovered to his dismay that he was somehow a celebrated character, distinctly a personage, quite somebody. He was justly bewildered at the awkward man-homage immediately lavished upon him by the sturdy denizens of the Black Creek country.

At every hand, in strange contrast with the post he had just left, he found men eager to greet him. With veiled insistence

inquiry was pressed upon him as to his previous career and deeds of distinction. Confused, Elmer's habit of caution asserted itself and he flatly refused to talk about himself.

Nothing could have been more adverse to his purpose. In the eyes of his questioners this added virtue to his viciousness; modesty in a bad man is surely a gift of the gods.

For the first time in his life Ranger Randolph found himself possessed of an enviable reputation; his fellow men no longer shunned him; his acquaintance was cultivated by one and all. He became a figure in the community; his august opinion was eagerly sought on all and sundry topics of the day.

Small wonder indeed that the erstwhile lonely ranger found himself enjoying the situation immensely. His immediate caution restrained him from actively questioning how it had all come about; his curiosity was submerged in a tide of contentment. Unconsciously a pardonable bit of swagger came into his bearing; he carried himself among his fellow men as befitted one of imposing position.

But Ranger Randolph was not without misgivings. He nursed a cold dread that some one might appear who had known him in the old days, or that some situation might arise that would reveal him to his new friends for what he really was.

Now at the Black Creek post were two rival sawmills cutting on contract from government timber. A feud of long standing existed between the two companies and open warfare was indulged in at every opportunity. Fistic frays and gunning were practised on the slightest provocation.

Such matters, however, were quite beyond the ranger's jurisdiction; they were solely the sheriff's grief. Randolph's duty, so far as the mills were concerned, was to see that the timber-cuttings were accomplished with due observance to the forest laws. Nevertheless, keen with his newly realized responsibility, Randolph made formal calls upon the rival managers to bear upon them that times had somewhat changed.

For two months life went smoothly for Ranger Randolph. Such a space of time free from trouble was unprecedented in the history of the Black Creek, and the solid citizenry exchanged the conviction that it was due to the iron hand of the new ranger. Elmer's swagger increased.

He returned to town late one afternoon from a week's absence on the fire-trails; and as he strolled carelessly along the main street in the full consciousness of pride he glanced in at the window of the Black Creek Mill office. Old Brant, the manager, was pacing the floor as he dictated a letter to a young woman bent over a stenographer's note-book.

Randolph's face was colorless as he passed on. He turned after a time and strolled back. The young woman was now seated before a typewriter industriously transcribing from the note-book. Randolph had not been mistaken; the Black Creek Mill's new stenographer was Florence White. Nemesis had overtaken him.

The end of the day found him impatiently waiting not a hundred yards from the office door. She emerged presently very crisp and trim in a well-fitting tailored skirt and jacket and a surprizingly small hat. She did not appear surprized at seeing him, and seemed reluctant to grant him permission to walk with her.

"Well, Elmer, I've been hearing wonderfully strange things about you!"

Randolph's struggling hope abruptly quitted him, and he responded with an unmusical grunt.

"Let me see, how many men have you killed, Elmer—five, or was it nine?"

Although her face was masked with an expression of simulated interest, he knew that she was laughing at him.

"And, Elmer, wasn't it splendid the way you captured those incendiaries who set fire to the reserve last year!"

"I hope you are enjoying yourself!" Elmer muttered.

Florence White looked up sternly, but as he was staring straight out before him he did not see the glistening mistiness of her blue eyes.

"I am not enjoying myself, Elmer Randolph! I—I never was more miserable in my life. To think that you came here and told all those things!"

He turned sharply upon her.

"I told them? Who said I did?"

His sudden belligerence disconcerted her, and she asked with some meekness—

"Well, you did, didn't you?"

"I did not!" he returned emphatically. "Somebody joshed this town before I even

got here! Why, the day I arrived they began asking me about it. I kept still and made it worse; then it was too late to deny it all!"

"Of course, you'd want to deny it!" she observed coolly.

"I'd just like to get hold of the fellow who started it!"

Miss White smiled sweetly.

"What would you do if you found him, Elmer? Chase him into a cabin and leave him until you ran to get help?"

The ranger winced.

"That's it, Flo; rub it in! I suppose you've had a fine time telling folks they're all wrong, and I'm just an o'n'ry piker!"

She halted, looked angrily up at him.

"You know me better than that, Elmer Randolph! If you've developed a reputation it is of no interest to me. My boarding-house is just beyond, and you may leave me here. I'll never tell about you! Folks will find out the same way I did!"

Elmer experienced a quick feeling of relief that his day of reckoning was thus removed further into the future. His jauntiness of bearing reasserted itself.

"May I call around some evening, Flo?"

She shook her head.

"No, I think not. I'm sorry, Elmer, but you realize I'm not like the other folks hereabout. I really know you!"

Whereupon she left him, and it is indicative of how great a value he placed upon his new position in the world to record that he was far more relieved at knowing that his secret was safe than he was chagrined at being thus summarily dismissed.

THE feud between the rival lumber mills was fast riding to a climax. So long as their differences and the manifold expressions of their bad blood did not affect the Service, Ranger Randolph maintained himself aloof from their quarrel. But when the manager of the Short Line Lumber Company complained to him that logs from the government tract were coming to his mill with steel spikes buried in them, he was forced to take a hand.

He investigated the matter and held a long conference with Old Brant, the manager of the other mill. Across a wide desktop he told that gentleman that while he had been unable to obtain any direct indicatory evidence as yet, he was not going to rest well until he had found out a few things. Then somebody was going up on the carpet before the big chief. The Black Creek manager protested the intimation that he knew anything of the spiking of the logs.

A week passed with no further development. Four strangers arrived in town; on several evenings Randolph saw them at the Lone Star bar. One of them, who appeared to be the leader of the group and who advertised himself as Red Cullum, approached the ranger on the subject of patents, explaining that he and his friends were searching for homesteads.

Then late one afternoon fire was reported on the government tract. Six distinct blazes started simultaneously, and on the breast of a rising wind rapidly consolidated and swept into the heart of a rich valley.

Ranger Randolph, exercising the power of his office, impressed a crew to fight the fire. It was a grim battle. Numb with the fatigue of countless hours, they threw a fire-trail across the path of the flames and fought it to a standstill on the line. But before the conflagration was under control the timber-stand designated for the Short Line Timber outfit, together with their logging equipment, was very effectively wiped out.

When it was over the weary ranger returned to town and slept the clock around. He awoke to find a telegram from the district ranger bearing the advice that he was coming to make a personal investigation of the affair.

As it would be several days before his superior arrived Randolph rode back to the site of the fire to make preliminary survey. All forenoon he spent in the vicinity of the fires' origin, going from point to point where the initial blazes had been reported.

There was no gainsaying the fact that the fires appeared to have been laid with an eye to the prevailing wind. It was improbable that a series of blazes so cunningly aimed could have been natural. A triangle drawn upon a map of the timber, using the line of the six fires for its base, would lay its apex in the very heart of the Short Line Timber Company's operations.

Randolph could deduce but one conclusion from his investigation—the fires had been of incendiary origin. This recalled to his mind the feud between the Black Creek Mill and the unfortunate Short Line outfit.

It remained, he considered, only to apprehend the firebrand who had been paid to set the blazes, wring confession from him, and confront the Black Creek management with the evidence.

Early in the afternoon he turned his horse back toward town. He had ridden perhaps a mile when a figure abruptly stepped from the hazel thicket at the side of the way. Randolph recognized him as Old Dave, a hermit, who inhabited the shake cabin a mile back from the trail.

"Howdy, ranger," the ancient greeted, running his fingers through his matted gray beard.

From ragged holes in his felt hat wisps of hair stuck out in all directions, giving him the appearance of a wandering scarecrow.

"Been up seeing the fire?"

Randolph drew rein.

"She was wicked while she lasted, Dave. More luck than good judgment that we got her out when we did."

Old Dave regarded him with an air of mystery.

"How do you think she started, ranger?"

The Service man shook his head.

"Haven't given it a thought, Dave. Pretty dry in the woods just now; lots of pitch out."

" 'Twasn't pitch started her, I reckon, ranger."

Randolph appeared surprized, to the old fellow's evident satisfaction.

"Think not? How so?"

"Lots of reasons, ranger," the oldster returned, shaking his grizzled head. "Don't look right at all—too sort of mechanical."

He stroked his beard reflectively; then as if launching a new subject—

"Seen any strangers in the woods lately, ranger?"

"Haven't seen any, Dave. Don't think there are any new folks about."

He recalled quickly the presence of Red Cullum and his three followers.

"No, I don't think we've had any newcomers in quite some time."

"Don't be too sure, ranger. That's just the trouble with you Service youngsters. Think you know a heap more than the old woods-hogs. Forget it, son. I seen strangers right here on this trail the very day of the fire!"

"Do tell, Dave!" the ranger replied, justly giving expression to his surprize for the other's benefit. "What did they look like?"

"Saw them come down the trail about an hour before the fire got to racing big. Three of them were just common run; but the fourth could be described some. Big fellow with red hair and a wide hat pinned up on one side."

The ranger chirruped to his horse.

"Much obliged, Dave. I'll have Carter send you up a side of bacon. I've got to be hurrying along."

He urged the horse down the trail toward town, satisfied that Red Cullum was the man he wanted. He recalled that he had not seen any of the gang since the day of the fire; doubtless they had long since taken to the trail.

It might require weeks to apprehend them, and Randolph had very special reasons for wanting the job finished up in short order. He knew that his new friends would expect summary methods of him. He determined to reverse his initial plan and go after the Black Creek manager first.

HE SWEPT down the main street at a smart canter and drew up before Brant's office. Through the wide window he saw Florence White at her typewriter; the bookkeeper and his assistant stood beyond bending over their ledgers; in the room's center, seated at his flat-top desk, was the manager.

Randolph strode through the door with a pronounced swagger that befitted one of riotous and high-handed ways. He disregarded the look of cool amusement in Florence White's eyes and passed on to the flat-top desk.

"Brant, I've a little matter to talk over with you," Elmer pronounced imposingly. "Can I see you in private?"

Brant's grizzled brows contracted, and he answered after the manner of his ancient kind who held the Service in bold contempt:

"I don't have private dealings with rangers. What do you want now?"

"Have it your own way, Brant; it's your funeral," Randolph replied loftily.

He paused an impressive moment, surveying the manager from head to foot. Then he said quickly:

"I've got the goods on Red Cullum, Brant. Want to hear his confession?"

Old Brant leaped to his feet forthwith, a red tide surging to his face.

"Red Cullum lies!" he bellowed.

Randolph laughed.

"Then you know what Red has to say?"

"I—I don't know or care what he says!"

"Then how do you know he lies?" the ranger asked with huge politeness.

The grizzled timberman raged in silence. The bookkeeper whispered to his assistant, who slipped quietly out of the office. Florence White was typing erratically.

Randolph leaned across the counter which separated him from the manager's desk.

"Brant, you bit like a hungry trout. I couldn't get it on you when you spiked those logs, but this time you're sewed up so tight you can't move. If the sheriff wasn't out of town I'd swear out a warrant right now. But as he's away I'm warning you not to leave town. I may want you any minute."

He left the office and strode down the unpaved street toward the Lone Star saloon, thoroughly satisfied with himself and his handling of Old Brant.

As he halted before the swinging doors of the saloon the Black Creek Mill's assistant bookkeeper stepped out. He was pale and glanced startledly at the ranger as he hurried past in the direction of the office.

Randolph wondered at the strange actions of the young fellow as he pushed open the doors. Then he understood. Perhaps twenty men occupied the barroom; but instantly his eyes fell upon Red Cullum and his three companions, who faced him from in front of the bar.

A silence, electric with expectancy, pervaded the place. All eyes were turned upon the ranger. The doors swung closed behind him; with almost military precision the four strangers drew revolvers. Three of the weapons covered the men at the bar; Red Cullum directed his toward the ranger.

"Hands up, everybody!" the red giant bellowed.

He motioned with his revolver to the ranger.

"Over there with the rest of them."

Randolph slowly raised his hands and followed the direction of the barrel. He felt keenly the eyes of his friends upon him; he knew that the moment he had feared was at hand.

The four strangers, still covering the occupants of the room, backed quickly to the door.

"If anybody comes out of this door in ten minutes he's a suicide," Red Cullum shouted. "Good-by, Mr. Bad-Man Ranger. You're a laugh, you are!"

The doors swung closed behind the retreating figures. A fusillade of shots sounded; the swinging doors trembled and were splintered as the strangers fired upon them to impress the veracity of their warning.

Instantly there was a stir among the men at the bar. Several of them loudly expelled the air from their lungs; somebody snickered; the bartender said—

"There's going to be —— popping around here!"

The ranger was whipped to action by the implication of the words. He ran swiftly across the room, flung up the sash of the side window and leaped to the ground outside. The others in the room rushed to the window and peered circumspectly around the frame.

They beheld Randolph running swiftly across the street. A block below the strangers' horses were tied to a hitching-post where they had first dismounted. It was plain to the watchers that the ranger was attempting to cut them off from reaching their animals.

Half-way across the street they saw Randolph raise his revolver and fire twice. As he had drawn the fire from the swinging doors some of the men ventured to peer out above them. Two of the strangers lay in the middle of the street; Red Cullum and his remaining companion dodged swiftly behind a pile of boxes standing near the general store across the street.

Randolph had won the first point; he had cut them off from their horses.

"AIN'T that ranger a heller!" the barkeep exulted. "And he's got to do it alone—sheriff's out of town!"

"He ain't done anything marvelous yet," some one objected. "Let's see how close he comes to taking Red Cullum!"

Randolph reached the opposite side of the street amid a hail of bullets and sank gratefully behind a horse-trough at the curb. The trough was constructed of stout two-inch pine and was filled with water. It formed an adequate barrier to Red Cullum's bullets.

He glanced cautiously around the end of the trough. The pile of boxes behind which

the two incendiaries had flung themselves stood in plain view. Behind the pile and extending above it was a high board fence. The quarry could not escape unseen. If they attempted a dash for the corner beyond or tried scaling the fence they would make excellent targets.

Randolph glanced back the way he had come. A tremor seized him at the sight of the two figures lying motionless in the street. He had never before shot a man; his nerves jumped perilously at the thought.

Beyond the two figures he caught a glimpse of the Lone Star saloon. A score of faces appeared above and below the swinging doors. Farther up the street, where his horse stood, he saw Old Brant and Florence White watching from the door of the Black Creek Mill office.

He addressed his attention to the problem at hand. Perhaps eighty yards separated him from the barricade of Red Cullum and his companion. From moment to moment shots were exchanged, but without apparent result. The affair had achieved a deadlock.

Randolph was disturbingly conscious of the scores of eyes across the street expectantly directed upon him. He roused himself sharply and peered around the end of the trough. Instantly a hail of lead greeted his appearance. He dropped flat on the ground, permitting one hand to extend past the trough's end.

He lay thus as if struck for a minute or more; then cautiously glanced out. Red Cullum's remaining companion had left the hiding-place and was quickly approaching. As he reached a point opposite the door of the general store Randolph opened fire. The revolver clattered to the ground from the man's hand as with an oath he sprang into the doorway. Through the glass show-window Randolph caught a fleeting glimpse of the proprietor and his clerk as they pounced upon the wounded man and drew him struggling to the rear of the store.

Randolph was disappointed. He had hoped that the trick would net him both of them, or at least Red Cullum himself. That individual's bullets in a futile access of rage were splintering the pine face of the trough.

He surveyed with dismay the open space which lay between him and his quarry. He realized that the taking of Red Cullum meant now just one thing—he would have to cross that space. Trickery had lost its effectiveness; the other would be thoroughly on guard for further ruse. It was the showdown.

His duty was plain enough; the Service demanded summary methods of its men. But he stayed crouched behind the protecting trough, his nerves twisting and writhing like so many agitated vipers. He visioned himself dashing toward the quarry's barricade, the space whining with lead that was hot and stinging and that cut and rent the flesh of him. His imagination was fully at work; the madness of fore-fear was upon him.

He glanced again over his shoulder to the faces in the doorway of the Lone Star. Those new and loyal friends were watching him eagerly, expecting some deed of valiance or mad boldness of him.

Farther up the street he saw Florence White, her dress whipping in the breeze. At that distance he could not discern the expression of her face, yet he knew that she was expecting of him just the opposite of those friends across the street. As she had said, she really knew him.

Abruptly his attention was attracted by a moving cloud of dust that descended the trail across Cedar Hill, two miles away. After a moment he made out the progress of three horses, and as they raced upon a rocky stretch of trail and the dust-cloud momentarily swept behind he was able to identify the plunging white animal in the lead.

A quick sense of relief seized him. There could be no doubt that the cavalcade on Cedar Hill was the returning sheriff and his deputies.

But this feeling of relief was short-lived. He realized that he didn't want help. The Service by all its limited traditions was zealously individualistic, sufficient unto itself. He felt keenly the eyes upon him; what would be the wealth of their scorn if he should solicit the approaching help!

Only for a moment did he sway perilously with indecision. Then fore-fear was lost in the immediate fear that he would not measure up to the ideal mirrored in the eyes behind him. The weight of reputation smothered all else; the burden of greatness was to be upheld. He sprang at once into the open.

A bullet whined close by. He ran on, crouching low, and felt a jarring impact

against his right shoulder. He was rudely swung about, but righted himself; and, laughing, he plunged on, conscious of a flowing warmth at his shoulder.

He was amazed to find how easy it was. He discovered that he was relishing the situation. The tide of adventure flooded his being, submerging all save the thrill of Chance.

He fired twice in rapid succession, splintering the corner boxes. The quarry replied with alacrity. Randolph ran in a zigzag course to confuse the other's aim. He counted Cullum's shots carefully. The fifth struck his leg and a pronounced limp came into his gait. The sixth went high.

Then he ceased zigzagging and charged directly forward. He knew that Cullum was reloading. He gained the end of the barricade in full career, swung drunkenly about the corner, and flung himself upon the kneeling figure.

In a crashing fall the outlaw went over backward to the ground. With a thump Red Cullum's flaming head struck the rocky surface of the unpaved street. Randolph was overwhelmed by a wave of dizziness; in panic lest he faint and the quarry escape he reached for the other's throat. His thumbs were pressing the jugular when the realization smote him that Red Cullum lay quite still. A trickle of blood crept from beneath his head.

Fighting off the encroaching dizziness, Randolph laboriously got to his feet. He had a blurred vision of three horsemen drawing up their plunging mounts near by. He heard many feet running swiftly from the direction of the Lone Star. He grasped the edge of the boxes for support.

The sheriff and his deputies flung themselves from their animals and ran toward him. Randolph struggled to grin at the blurred faces.

"I want this fellow, sheriff, and what's left of his three friends. I'll swear out a warrant as soon as I feel better. Just now I'm goin' sleep!"

He was surrounded by a score of familiar, excited faces. They formed a circle about him which presently began to spin. He nodded pleasantly with just a hint of swagger and slipped quietly to the ground.

HE WAKENED to a pained and uncomfortable world. He was unable to identify his surroundings. He saw vaguely many familiar faces; he caught the sound of hushed whispering. Some one was twisting a bandage about his leg; Florence White was bathing the wound at his shoulder.

He closed his eyes and lay resting, flooded with a warming sense of contentment. He had read the high enthusiasm upon the faces of his new friends clustered about. A peaceful drowsiness overcame him.

He became swiftly alert when above the sibilant whispering the words of one of the watchers reached him.

"Ain't he gosh-awful game! Why, sheriff, he ain't got no fear of firearms in him!"

Randolph felt the form of Florence White, kneeling beside him, move impatiently. Her hand ceased the work of bathing his wound. He cautiously opened one eye and saw the mistiness in her eyes as she glanced with quick spirit at the speaker.

"Of course he is!" she exclaimed in a voice that was delightfully unsteady. "What do you expect of a man with all those n-n-notches on his gun?"

Quite unashamed, she raised a bit of handkerchief to her eyes.

Elmer's blood pounded riotously through his veins.

"But this was nothing at all!" Florence White continued with pride. "This was only play for him! Just you wait until next time!"

Elmer started precipitously. On the instant his ready imagination proceeded to conjure up a lurid prospect of days and years ahead stirring with perplexities, difficulties and dangers. But he was undismayed. To his surprize, when the imposing picture was completed he found himself surveying it with decided relish. The great truth was his.

Some time later he fell asleep after propounding mentally the conviction that after all there was one fly in his ointment. He rather regretted his lurid reputation. It might exert a dampening influence upon whatever rebellious spirits still remained in the Black Creek district.

RICH CROOKS

by

GORDON YOUNG

A Complete Novelette

Author of "Born to be Hanged, But—," "Bogus Gems," etc.

NOW and then people have got in my way, and bullets have been used. But it is another thing to kill a man in what is called cold blood. Every one of us has perhaps wondered that God has let certain people live and each of us has probably wished for the daring to do what God should—in our opinion. He knows all about everybody and that perhaps makes the difference, since circumstantial evidence has no influence on Him. That perhaps explains why He lets some people live on and on, though perhaps not why others die.

There came a time when I held the lives of two men in my hands and did not know which to throw away. One had killed a woman and the other had believed evil things of her. For a time I felt that the latter was even the more deserving of death and I was sure that both had lived too long, yet I hesitated to wink at the death of either. Contrary to the opinion that many people have of me, I am scrupulous about certain things.

"Don Everhard," a wrathful, youthful cousin of mine had once said in a tone of disappointment and disgust, "you talk like a preacher!"

He had encountered certain scruples of mine and had angrily searched for the most crushing thing he could say to a professional gambler who was usually spoken of in the newspapers, as a "gun-fighter" and occasionally faintly damned by the police—who were, as frequently, wrong—for a "clever crook."

This is essentially a complicated story because from first to last it covers many years and involves the motives and wickedness of more than one man. Sheer luck, if not accident, twice brought me into the plot; though I sometimes suspect Fate of being too thoughtful a dramatist to leave anything to mere chance.

In a way, what I have to tell come about because Jack Richmond, that same cousin, got himself engaged to Cora Cornwall. When I learned that her name was Cornwall and that she came from Utah, I had reason to meditate interestedly.

In my youth, our family, a rather large one, had been land-poor in southern California, but Jack came of age and into possession of an oil field all his own. He arrived with his pockets full of money to camp on my door-step. His imagination had been fired by what he had heard of me, in spite of the censorship which heads of our family had maintained. I was the "disgrace," and he had ambitions to follows in my tracks. But, as I have said, he fell in love.

Ordinarily, I do not interfere with the folly of other people, not even of my own cousins, but I had dragged him almost by

the ears from a card table and he was indignant. So he classed me with a preacher, which was not without its complimentary angle. I really could not blame him for gambling, since we had the same grandfather back of us and there was a strong undertow in our blood to do the things for which he had been famous

II

JACK, who was not a gay spendthrift and did not like the flashing luxury that usually attends the giddy young man of money, usually dined with me in a quiet restaurant that gave more attention to its cuisine than to potted plants and gilded frescoing. One evening he chanced to dine there alone, and a girl at a near-by table helplessly appealed to him.

She had lost her purse and her check came to one dollars and seventy cents. He did what anybody would have done, and what she intended a young fool would do also. Her explanations were plausible, and her personality seemed fascinating. He went home with her and was introduced to two old men, an uncle and a father, who, against Jack's protests, refunded the one dollar and seventy cents and gave him their thanks.

With the usual impudence he said of them to me:

"The old fellow with the glasses an' the twisted nose is the father. The other dyspeptic's her uncle."

When he told me that their names were Joseph and Daniel Cornwall, I said nothing, though I had much to say.

I knew it was not by chance that he had been more or less artfully brought into their house. For a month in one way and another those same Cornwall brothers had been trying to get in touch with me. I did know nothing about the one called Joseph and not all that I wished to know about the one called Daniel—not all I would have liked to know in case our affairs were to be further entwined.

They had been "entwined"—if I may use so mild a word—some years before, but he didn't know it. That is, he did not know that Don Richmond, alias Everhard, was the same person that had entered his office, plundered his safe and later disposed very effectively of the person who tried to recover the little box of papers. Daniel Cornwall's suspicions centered on a man named Smithers, who was far from being innocent.

But I must continue with Jack's part for a few words more. He called on Cora again. He liked her, he loved her. I have often wondered why. There must be a benevolent destiny that occasionally takes young fools in hand. But Jack seemed to win the confidence of the two loose-jointed secretive old men by the very remark that any one would have thought most likely to get him thrown out of the house and have the door bolted behind him.

He was blindly led to discuss what relatives he had in the city and, with a little burst of pride, mentioned that I, Don Everhard, was his cousin. At that, he said, they became surprized and eager.

My name is well known. Any time a hack writer, one of these fellows that fill what space is left over from the day's news and are paid by the inch, simply must pay his rent, he rehashes what somebody before him has written of my record, discusses my psychology and speculates on how a man with so many notches on his gun—I never notched a gun in my life—can move unmolested in a civilized community. Those old fellows began to ask interested questions. They wanted to meet me. Jack said that he would have me over the very next afternoon. He did.

III

JACK had explained to me:

"Ugly old codgers—bet they're rich. Father's Joseph and uncle's Dan. How do I know? She called one Uncle Dan and he called the other Joseph. Think I was asleep? Not me. I was sittin' on the edge of my chair swattin' every question that came over the plate."

We were met at the door by a servant who did not succeed in hiding the fact that he was surprized to see me. He had no way of knowing from my face or manner that I noticed his surprize, but I did. As there is not one face in a thousand that I can not place immediately, I was a little puzzled to find myself unable to remember one who showed such marked recognition of me.

He was a man somewhat above middle age, slightly bald, rather red of face and well fed. He looked like a hypocrite, as every able-bodied man does when he plays flunkey, bowing in those whom he really does not think are his betters or even his equals.

Perhaps they wouldn't be if he did not choose the lap dog's way of keeping his stomach full. This fellow's jaw stiffened and his eyes popped; his hands were pretty unsteady, and I saw drops of sweat on his forehead.

We went through the hall into an old room with a high ceiling. The room appeared musty and full of shadows, though the curtains were up and the Autumnal sun was bright. We were greeted by the two old men.

I say they were old, though at a glance I saw they were aged by something besides years. Mr Daniel Cornwall I had met before—but then I had worn a mask. He was the elder, the larger, the more decisive, and I did not doubt at all but that he was the most criminal, though, excepting that his face was flabby rather than thin, both men looked somewhat alike.

Mr. Joseph Cornwall appeared almost consumptive. I heard him cough frequently. His face was thin, just skin across bones, his nose prominent and a little twisted. He had a thin mustache that, like a ragged veil, fell over his loose mouth, and the large rimmed glasses accentuated the queerness of his face. His voice was harshly husky. I had not known him except remotely. He had in someway remained entirely outside of my circle of experience during the time I was in Utah. Daniel Cornwall was the dominant character.

Their intentions were something more than friendly. I could not imagine what kind of starling Jack had found in that nest of lean owls. Cora did not come into the room until we had been there for some time. I could not guess what those old fellows actually wanted, but I had known all along that they were after something protective from me.

I am continually having people after me for one reason or another—and not alone from those who think that my gun is for sale. It would not be easy to count the number of people who dislike me and, as the saying goes, have it in for me. I have enemies that I have never seen, never heard of, since some people hold a grudge against me because their own friends have been hurt —some of them buried.

After a few words Joseph mentioned that they too were from the West, as if that put a tribal relation upon us. They sat back with their eyes on me, and Jack imperviously rattled on. He said nothing worth repeating, and they were obviously waiting—for what I did not know, but for something probably that would give them opportunity to talk to me alone. Being a fine pair of old schemers, they had already prepared for that.

I had noticed the man, the footman who met us at the door, trying to attract Daniel Cornwall's attention, when we came into the room, but he had been ignored. Presently he returned and with an obvious effort kept his eyes from me while telling the old fellow, Daniel, that he would like to speak to him on " a matter of great importance, sir."

Daniel looked at him as one might order away a well-trained dog, made a gesture and said—

"I'm busy, Quiller. I'm busy."

"It might be important," said Joseph a little nervously to his brother as Quiller reluctantly turned away, shooting a glance at me.

"His nerves are going," Daniel growled. "This morning he was all excited over something he dreamed."

"But Dan——" the other began, and it was plain that his nerves were also jangled.

"Being frightened at every shadow isn't going to help matters," said the more aggressive Daniel, a very hard expression coming into his face for a second. He spoke rather testily.

I knew that Daniel had a temper, a great amount of resolution, much cunning and no honor. I knew also—one who plays poker for a living knows many things by simply looking into a man's face—that Joseph was much like him.

Finally Cora came in, dressed in a plain, neat tailored suit of dark cloth. She was not at all as I had expected. Not at all. I looked at her very hard. She was of the same type, appearance and manner as a woman whom, some ten years before, I had gone out of my way to help. It was strange, indeed, but I rather liked her at once though I knew she had made a dupe of my cousin.

For one thing she wasn't pretty. And, having that blessing, of course did not think that every man was made to sigh for her, to flirt with her, to hover about her and be satisfied with smiles and artificial blushes. It is a great day in the lives of blond flappers when they learn how to blush by holding their breath. Cora was a blonde but she did not blush. Her eyes were gray and

serious. She had probably been matter-of fact and serious in the restaurant and actually fascinated Jack where a more pretty and giddy young person would have aroused him to only a flirtation.

She was intelligent and direct. I have given my nights and much of my days to learning across green-topped tables, looking into the eyes of men. One plays most games of cards by watching the pips. One plays poker by watching faces. For a long time I watched her face with a hard scrutiny that must have made her uneasy. I did not care. I wondered if slight, blond, gray-eyed women were all alike.

She had her hat in her hand as if she were going out. After being introduced to me, she said:

"Uncle Dan, something seems wrong with Quiller. He looks ill."

"Quiller's been drinking again," Daniel Cornwall said gruffly. Then more personally— "You are going out, my dear?"

She looked at him with a touch of surprize. She was no adept at deception. It was her rôle to go out and take Jack with her. In a few minutes she did, and I was left alone with the two old men.

IV

SIT would be needless if not tedious to tell at length all that was said. The young people had no sooner left the room than Daniel got up and drew together the sliding-doors across the entrance from the hallway. Joseph, with an attempt at a confidential smile, moved his chair a little closer toward me. Daniel looked about cautiously and, seeming satisfied, also pulled his chair a little nearer to me.

"Mr. Everhard," Daniel began, rubbing his hands together, "chance has at last brought us together."

He said it with a grin, smugly. His grin was unpleasant. His smugness repugnant.

For a brief moment I wondered if he knew more than I gave him credit for knowing and if he thought that he had trapped me. But he was merely trying to make me think accident had taken the place of design.

"And, Mr. Everhard," he went on, "as we have conveyed to you before, we are rich men."

Joseph nodded and smiled encouragingly.

I did not say anything. I looked at them, from one to the other. My thoughts were scooting in and out. I knew that Daniel Cornwall had enemies; some of them—one at least—a very powerful man who thought himself more or less helpless so long as Daniel retained possession of a little black steel box, or rather of its contents. I knew too that he had another enemy said to be a wild, dangerous fellow who would have—had he known who I was—possibly have tried to make good certain and jealous threats.

"And we will be generous," Daniel added impressively, as if I did not know that he had a reputation for being miserly.

The point to the fifteen minutes of fumbling speech was this:

They had previously tried to engage me as a sort of personal guard and they now asked me to state what terms I pleased. They were old, innocent men and in danger. Would I interest myself in their behalf? In looking about anxiously for some one to help them, they had thought no one else could do so well as I. They had written letters asking me to call on them. Those being coldly answered, they had sent a lawyer to engage my interest. They might have sent the devil with results. I dislike lawyers—all of them.

I mentioned the protective value of the police.

Daniel made a deprecating gesture and grinned. The police were all right for watching rat-holes. They could follow tracks. This was different.

I mentioned private agencies.

He came back flatteringly and said their need was for a man of high personal courage and resource. Steve Ellis, he said, could evade the police. Private detectives would not be likely to stand against him.

Daniel Cornwall himself was a crafty, vicious, enormously rich old rascal—the sort of a man of whom it was said that he never kept an inconvenient promise nor rewarded a friend.

I knew something of Steve Ellis. I had known his wife very well. I also knew something of the man who was then governor of Utah and Cornwall's most powerful enemy. Perhaps that was one—or maybe the—reason why Daniel Cornwall was out of the State, though in his little black box he had put evidence that could ruin and wreck the man.

It was a curious and complicated situation. The governor, whom I will call Walsh,

though that in no way resembles his name, had in his younger days become involved, perhaps more or less innocently, in some profitable crooked work. Cornwall had stored the indubitable legal evidence of that in his little black box. Walsh knew much that was crooked, wicked, even dastardly, of Cornwall and longed to bring him to justice, to crush him, wipe him out; but to do so he would have to sacrifice his own career, for Cornwall would have retaliated by opening the little black box.

Cornwall, for his part, would have liked to exterminate Walsh, but if he attacked Walsh then the Governor would probably, in the midst of his own ruin, land Cornwall in prison, if not on to the scaffold—supposing that a multimillionaire can ever be hanged, which is doubtful in a country that leaves justice in the hands of lawyers.

So it was that they were like two powerful giants, deadly in their enmity but aware that it would be mutually ruinous if they made an open fight. Let Walsh once get his hands on that black box, and Cornwall was doomed. Nor did I doubt at all that Cornwall hesitated at thoughts of assassination in trying to figure out how he could dispose of Walsh.

The immediate concern of the Cornwall's however, was not with Walsh. It was with Steve Ellis. The situation was made more peculiar and complicated by Ellis.

Whereas Cornwall and Walsh were continually bluffing each other, and neither wanted or dared to come actually to a crisis, Ellis was thought to be implacable in his hatred of Daniel Cornwall.

The Cornwalls thought, as many people have, that I was a sort of cutthroat, for sale to a high bidder and with cunning enough to evade punishment. I have evaded punishment largely because I never deserved it. Even the police, East and West, certainly no friends of mine, were not without a kind of—hum—let me say a kind of gratitude for the way I had come out of corners into which I had occasionally been crowded.

Law-abiding citizens, whom the police feel it their duty to protect and to avenge, do not shoot at people from the rear or from shadows, do not pick quarrels and lay traps. Moreover, I never bothered the police with complaints. The police and courts everywhere more or less respect the ruling of Western juries to the effect that the man who draws last and shoots first is innocent.

So those two old fellows, wholly unaware that I knew a great deal about the cause of their fears, with a kind of grotesque eagerness, in which both became excited, tried to tell me the history of their haunting terrors. It was a long story and Daniel lied a great deal.

I won't repeat their story, for it was largely false and when I have said that Daniel claimed Steve Ellis' hate was inspired over certain mining claims, I have told enough. That part may or may not have been true. I did not know. Anyway, perhaps money had originally been at the bottom of the trouble, but Ellis seemed to have been the sort of man who looked for trouble. He had—so I heard—repeatedly said that he would kill me. He did not know my name. He knew merely the name I happened to be using at the time, and then he was in a position to make threats with impunity, for he was in the penitentiary. He believed, or pretended to believe, that my presence under the roof of his wife's house was injurious to his honor, and, since he was in prison, he was dependent on the tales that other men carried to him.

V

IT chanced that some years before I had been in Utah, in various parts of Utah, and had not taken the trouble to introduce myself to anybody—that is, by the name which was perhaps known to some of the people there, even then.

I was patiently waiting until the police of San Francisco had—as they eventually did do—assured themselves that I had had nothing to do with a certain little affair in which numerous liars conspired together to get me out of the way, legally. There had been enough perjured witnesses to hang a saint.

I may mention, though it has nothing to do with this story, that, at last impatient, I returned quietly to San Francisco, made a midnight call upon the ring-leader of the frame-up and impressed on him that I was weary of waiting for his conscience to get the better of his prejudice against me. I suggested that he confess the next morning. He did. So it was that during the time I had been in Utah under the name of Smith or some such nonentity, I had minded my own business and got into trouble.

It came about through a woman, Mrs Ellis. Her husband was in prison and for some reason or other she wanted him out. I was staying quietly in her home, paying board and rent. I liked her because she asked no questions. She was a little, blond, gray-eyed woman and told me some things about herself—not with the idea of arousing sympathy, but because it is the nature of her sex to talk.

Among other things, she loved this husband, Steve Ellis, who was in prison. She said that he was innocent—most wives do say that sort of thing about their convicted husbands. She said the trouble had originated over a copper-mine claim and that Daniel Cornwall—one of many "copper kings" of the West—had railroaded Steve Ellis because he wouldn't do some of the Cornwall dirty work.

I asked questions in one direction and another and as I loafed a good deal over poker tables I had plenty of chance to hear all manner of reports. As nearly as I could tell, Daniel Cornwall was a scoundrel and Steve Ellis was dangerous man with numerous friends. I heard that Ellis had formerly been a gunman in Cornwall's employ. I heard many things, and some of them were no doubt true.

Mrs. Ellis maintained, however, that he was innocent. She said that Steve had told her that if she, or any of his friends, could get hold of a little black box in Cornwall's private safe, Cornwall himself would pull wires and bribe officials to get him out. Mrs. Ellis said that Steve was a "good man in his way," but it seemed that he was always in trouble through no fault of his own.

"Why," she said, "his own child scarcely knows him!"

The child was in a boarding-school where Mrs Ellis, by dint of scrimping and gathering money from the Lord knows where, kept her under the illusion that a girl's life would be easier and happier if secluded and educated.

I had had nothing in particular to do and, having assured myself that Daniel Cornwall was a mean rich old devil, and looking the ground over carefully, I took certain precautions by way of disguise and paid him a visit. As nearly as he could tell I looked like a rough miner. The ends of a mustache poked from beyond my mask. My clothes were of the sort a miner would be likely to wear when he thought he was passing for a city fellow. It was necessary, of course, to dispose of a servant or two before I reached him. I made the visit late in the evening and I tied the servants comfortably in a corner and left them there to meditate.

Daniel Cornwall was a bachelor, so his establishment was easily raided. I found him in bed. I got him out and made him open the safe. Not finding what I wanted, I induced him to put on his clothes and go with me to his office. I succeeded in convincing him that he would be shot if he tried to give an alarm and also that something of the kind would happen if he looked around at me during the time I had the mask off—for obviously I could not go parading through even nearly deserted streets at 11 P.M. with a mask on.

I have found that rich men are easily bluffed by threats of violence. Anyway, we went to his office and he opened the safe there. He nearly dropped when he saw me remove the little black steel box. He offered money—he offered almost everything imaginable.

I took the key away from him and opened the box. I read enough of the papers to see what they were about. Walsh at that time was attorney general, or something of the kind.

In a kind of disgust I threw the key toward an open window. It went out. I replaced the papers and slammed the lid down, not noticing that a corner of one of the papers had stuck out.

"I'll never get that box open," he cried. "It's a special lock——"

"You won't need to open it for some time," I told him. "This is what I came after, but there is a good chance that you may get it back."

He had thought that I was looking into the box in the hope of finding money or jewels, and he was tremendously wrought up when he saw that I intended to carry it off.

I let him bite on a handkerchief stuffed into his mouth and tied his arms and legs to a chair.

Then I went out and into a cheap rooming-house where I had changed clothes earlier in the evening. It was one of those houses that did not have running water, but a pitcher and large bowl for washing purposes was in the room. I put the bowl near the window so as to carry out the odor of smoke

and burned a few little things I wanted to get rid of, my mustache among them.

The next day a messenger delivered a package to Mrs. Ellis. It came "from one of Steve's friends," so a scrap of paper with it said.

She was a wise woman and did not take me into her confidence; that is, she said nothing about the "open sesame" having mysteriously arrived. Maybe she wondered what it contained, but there was no way of getting into it without going to a locksmith, and it was a solid little affair. Besides, for her purpose she did not need to get into it. She must have notified Cornwall that he had better use his influence or it would be turned over to Walsh, who would be glad to use his influence.

The same scrap of paper that told her it was "from one of Steve's friends" advised her to take the matter up with Walsh in case Cornwall did not show sufficient interest. I had realized—perhaps a little too late—that Walsh would probably think she had cheated him if she did call this attention to the box, for I had tampered a little with the contents.

USUALLY I spent my evenings down in Commercial Alley, over a poker table, just idly playing and having a little secret sport in making tinhorns wonder why their plans went awry. One hot, sultry night I left early, went home and, having a down-stairs bedroom, left the hall door open to get a little more air.

I shot the man who threw the glare of a dark lantern into my face from the doorway. I had an impression that there were two men—that is, I was sure I heard the rush and clatter of a man running. It wasn't the one I shot at. He was buried, after being identified as a shyster lawyer. Perhaps he thought it better to go direct after loot than more safely to take it second-hand from his larcenous clients.

Mrs. Ellis vaguely told me and the police that the thieves must have been after "some papers." She kept her own counsel as far as I knew, and I asked no questions. I left Salt Lake almost at once, since I did not care for the attention that was coming my way, though, of course, the coroner did not hold me in the least responsible. I went back to San Francisco.

I did not know what had happened in the case after I left, for I was kept rather busy with personal affairs of my own.

But now the Cornwall brothers, after having told me about Steve Ellis, sat up as if jerked by wires when I inquired—

"What ever became of Mrs. Ellis?"

For a moment or two, bony, loose-jointed Daniel looked as if I had hit him with a club, and the emaciated Joseph upset his glasses from off his nose in a quick dash to adjust them so as to peer the harder at me.

"Mrs. Ellis!" Daniel exclaimed with a suddenness that had a suggestion of alarm in it.

"How did you know—" the other Cornwall began and broke off chokingly.

"Any time a man is vengeful, you can make sure there is a woman's shadow on him," I said smoothly, as if unaware that I had plucked at a veil they did not care to have disturbed.

"But how did you know?" Daniel insisted with a sort of tentative suspicion, taking up his brother's question.

"Ten chances to a half of one, always, that it's a wife. If not a wife, then the daughter——"

"Daughter!"

Joseph's voice was excitedly high-pitched.

"Daughter," I repeated, nodding.

Daniel was staring at me. He did not know what to think.

I became aware that Joseph Cornwall, trembling from uplifted arms to his knees, was standing and was almost speechless in his emotion.

"I tell you Steve Ellis is a mean scoundrel!" he shouted hoarsely. "A brute, sir! He killed his wife as surely as a man ever killed anything! I adopted Cora Ellis, sir. Made her my heir. If he bothers her he ought to be shot down like a dog, and I would like to do it!"

He ended with a fit of coughing. The man was grotesquely pitiful. He looked about as dangerous as a sparrow. His emotion was far too great for his body. He shook from weakness. I looked at him for a long time. If that was acting it was extremely good acting, but I was not convinced.

"Joseph is tender-hearted," Daniel put in as if explaining something. I wondered what he thought he was explaining in such a tone of half-apology.

"You didn't want me to do it," Joseph almost flared.

"And see what it's got us into!"

"You know that has nothing to do with it. Steve Ellis hates me. Always has hated me."

"Never shown any love for me, either," Daniel replied. "But you—you tried to keep her from marryin' him. Wanted to marry her yourself."

There was much in his voice that sounded like a taunt.

"I know he was jealous of me," the grotesque Joseph said defensively.

"——!" his brother answered with mean scorn. "If he killed her it wasn't 'cause he was jealous of you. He was jealous of that tin-horn gambler that was living with her while he was in the pen!"

Daniel added a curse of his own against that "tin-horn gambler."

I inquired softly if Daniel had had trouble with that fellow.

It seemed that he had. He was rather vague and excited, but I gathered from his remarks that he had guessed the aforesaid tin-horn gambler had had something to do with a good deal of the trouble that came upon him about that time. He seemed to think—in spite of the intimation that Steve Ellis had had reason for hating the tin-horn—that the fellow had been a friend of Steve's.

I asked how Steve Ellis had brought about the death of his wife, but both of them were uncommunicative. They had questions of their own. I persisted. Daniel looked expectantly at his brother, and Joseph said that Ellis was sent up on circumstantial evidence. The woman was found dead less than twenty hours after he had been released from prison—her skull fractured. Now Steve Ellis was being again released—he had been released. Circumstantial evidence and all that, Joseph Cornwall explained exasperatedly, angrily, was the justification for letting him out.

Daniel watched me closely and was silent.

I remarked that it was strange, exceedingly strange.

Then Daniel spoke.

"That —— Walsh—governor—he's letting him out!"

I understood something then of how it had come about.

I said bluntly and with meaning that I might care to have a word or two with Steve Ellis when he arrived in New York.

Daniel Cornwall continued to eye me a little broodingly, but Joseph was full of gratitude.

As Daniel was pushing open the sliding doors I caught sight of Quiller, looking quite haggard and anxious, waiting at the foot of the stairs.

At the door I glanced back over the shoulder of the nervous Joseph, who was aimlessly talkative, agitatedly polite. I saw Quiller gripping the arm of Daniel Cornwall. I heard his excited whisper as, without looking toward me, he pointed. His eyes were on the dazed face of Daniel. I caught the words—

"—— the man that killed Taggart!"

The door closed behind me and somewhat reflectively I went on my way. Taggart had been the name of the shyster lawyer who had—considering the ways and morals of his sort—taken a step toward honesty in turning burglar. His regeneration might eventually have been complete had he not awakened me. I had always thought there had been two of them that night, and the man with Taggart might have, in the tenseness of that moment when the stream of light fell on my face, got such a vivid glimpse of me as to recognize me on sight years later. Perhaps it was my face that had troubled his dreams.

VI

SEVERAL things happened simultaneously and in rapid sequence.

The Cornwall brothers quarreled, and Cora, overhearing them, learned such things as caused her to flee the house. Her haste to get from under that roof caused her to remove also a little black box which had been entrusted among her things. Daniel, in constant dread of thieves, had thought they would be unlikely to search her personal effects and had had her keep it for him.

Daniel Cornwall, following the quarrel, also disappeared. When he discovered that I was the "tin-horn gambler" and the man who had shot Taggart, he thought he had caught the devil on his hook and was pretty much excited. He had sent Taggart and Quiller to try to get back that little steel box so as to avoid all delay and, if possible, obviate the need of having to let Steve Ellis get out of prison. Daniel had quarreled because he wanted to run and hide again, but Joseph, the weaker, younger and least aggressive, stubbornly refused. His conscience seemed to have been a little easier. He had been

traveling in the Orient at the time and had had nothing at all to do with the affair. He was sick too, he said, and in no condition to play the fugitive, though he felt, and rightly enough I supposed, that Steve Ellis would kill him if he got the chance. Likely enough he would make the chance.

Take any sort of strong, bold man, throw him into prison twice and he will probably come out of it desperate, dangerous, reckless. As nearly as I could gather from what I heard and what I suspected, Ellis had not only been jealous of him, but held him almost equally responsible for the things that made him, Ellis, so eager for vengeance against the brother.

So it was that Daniel Cornwall disappeared, taking Quiller with him. Quiller afterward came back to learn Cora's address, with a view toward recovering the precious box. Joseph did not know it. He advised Quiller to come to my cousin, or to me. Quiller lurked about until he got a word with Jack, but the word Jack gave him was to go to —— where he belonged. Quiller did not approach me, perhaps for fear that he might land in the same locality with Taggart.

I smiled over all that excitement about the little black box which, for all of its value and importance, had not been opened in years.

But things happened rapidly.

Shortly afterward a battered body was found on the waterfront, and by clothes, papers and purse was unquestionably identified as Daniel Cornwall's. The police got their hands on Quiller and held him in jail because he could tell no satisfactory story, and whenever a millionaire is murdered the police insist on at least pretending to have the guilty party.

Joseph was badly frightened and wanted to have Steve Ellis arrested, but nobody could find him. He had come to New York and he knew the Cornwall address. About the time the body was found he had telephoned, demanding to see Cora. He swore that he would see his daughter.

Joseph wrote me that Ellis was very angry about it. He said, in effect, that since Daniel was out of the way—the papers had given the tribute of headlines to the Salt Lake millionaire—he would ignore Joseph if he would "do the right thing by the girl." Joseph, with the moneyed man's usual viewpoint, could not understand what Ellis meant by the "right thing." How could a man, he wrote me plaintively, do more than he had for the girl?

"I am afraid he will kill her," the old man wrote.

His letter was not so much to give me explanations as to beg me to come to see him, and of course that meant to protect him. He was very broken up over Cora. Did I know where she was?

I did. I knew more than that. I knew what she had overheard when the Cornwalls, not suspecting that she was bending above the top of the stairs, quarreled.

She had fled in tears and anger and rage and bewilderment. She did not know where to go or what to do, but she wanted her father whom she had thought was still in prison. She tumbled into a cheap rooming-house as it seemed to fit her humiliation as well as her purse. She scorned the Cornwall money—the old fellows had not been so very generous in spending allowance—and sent for Jack Richmond.

She confided with him, and he came breathless to repeat it to me. I called on her, but she was a little afraid of me; yet she confirmed to me all that Jack had reported. She had overheard terrible things. She did not know what to do.

In tears she confessed that she had trapped Jack in the restaurant with the plea of no money and brought him home. The Cornwalls had forced her to do it. She seemed at that time to owe them so much that there was nothing which she would have refused to do for them, though it made her feel ashamed to lie.

I understood. I had from the first understood all about the craft the Cornwalls thought they were using in getting in touch with me through Jack.

I am an unsympathetic person, but, having heard Cora's story, I was a little affected. She was a fine girl. I was convinced of that. I joined with Jack in urging her to go into better surroundings and to let us engage a companion for her. She refused.

However, I did oppose Jack's insistence on marrying her forthwith. My impetuous cousin and I had an exchange of remarks. I tried to impress upon him that he would be a dunce to marry her before this trouble was over. He would have been, too. He exploded ill-temperedly and said many angry things.

He wanted to marry her and have the legal right to tell the world to go hang, and

to break anybody's head that interfered with her. He wanted to lynch Cornwall single-handedly. He was furious enough to tell me I might bluff some people just because I could shoot quick and straight, but he didn't want any interference from me. Did I understand?

I did—fully. I would not have had as much respect and liking for him if he had not been angry with me and said just the things he did say. There is much despicable in the man who shows common sense when in love. The ancients must have known it, for they pictured love as being blind. The fellow who calculates on whether or not a girl is trustworthy, whether or not he will have trouble on her account, is scarcely above the fellow who speculates on how much money he will make by the marriage.

Jack told me to go to the devil—that he was going to marry her at once. But he didn't. She was in no mood for marriage. She was full of troubles and inwardly tormented. She refused to marry him or to accept help from him. There was no pose about it. She was going to work and earn back something of her self-respect.

Jack was a likable fellow—though he might as well have carried his head under his arm for all the good it did him—and she no doubt loved him all the time but did not quite realize it. Or maybe she did realize it. I don't know. Anyway she refused to marry him.

VII

I CALLED on Joseph and asked for the truth, though I already knew more than he could tell me. Having been a successful business man, he was an adept at lying; in fact he had begun his career by being admitted to the bar.

With a tall glass of whisky and water by the table, toward which his trembling hand went frequently, he tried to tell what he thought would arouse sympathy for him.

It was impossible. Had he not been a feeble, sick old man I would have made his life more miserable than it was by letting him know just how much I knew.

What facts I did get from him were jerked rather than pried. It was offensive to me to hear him say that he had been in love with Mrs. Ellis almost from her girlhood. He had always been well off in money matters, but she chose to marry Steve Ellis, a big, drunken bully. So Joseph Cornwall said.

He had never married. He tried to make me think that it was because of a sentimental attachment for Cora's mother, but he did not succeed. He had no relatives that he cared about. He got himself appointed Cora's guardian, made her his heir though he had not legally adopted her.

I try to be honest—that is as honest as a man can be without developing into one of those unprejudiced nonentities who look at all sides of a question and never let themselves be stirred by a fierce, direct anger. But I did have to take into consideration that Joseph had been on a trip to the Orient during the time that I was in Salt Lake and at the time of Mrs. Ellis's death. In fact he had not returned until Ellis had been convicted of the murder. It was really his ill-health that kept me from being brutal toward him. I have repeatedly said that he was an old man, but he wasn't, in years—somewhere around forty-five, I judged. But he was feeble and troubled by fears, if not by his conscience.

He wanted my sympathy, my "friendship," as he spoke of it. I told him rather ambiguously that most of my friends were crooks who took their chances boldly with the police, and he reached hurriedly for his whisky, without understanding precisely what I meant.

In the course of trying to gain my gratitude, he explained that his brother—suspecting the gambler who had been staying at Mrs. Ellis's had had something to do with the theft of the little black box—had caused vicious reports of my presence there to be carried to Ellis in prison. Ellis was an inordinately jealous man, and the purpose of the lies had been to break up what friendship may have existed between Ellis and the man who called himself Smithers. The Cornwalls had learned through Quiller that Smithers and I were the same.

Joseph explained several times that he and his brother, knowing my reputation and knowing that I was in New York, had thought to engage me to protect them from Steve Ellis, and Daniel had been terrified to discover that I had in Utah been known as Smithers.

Joseph asked many questions, but he got no answers—or rather no information. I did not give him Cora's address and he could not give me Ellis's. Private detectives had kept him and his brother informed of

Ellis's threats and movements after he was pardoned by that rascally governor, Walsh, but all track had been lost after he reached New York.

"You have no idea, Mr. Everhard," he said, "what a wretchedly dishonest man Walsh is."

It happened that I knew something of that too.

"I am convinced," he went on, "that he pardoned Ellis just to have him hound my brother and me."

"Why don't you strike back?" I demanded.

"Strike back!"

"Yes. Ruin him?"

"What do you mean?" he asked anxiously, suspiciously. Then he blurted it out: "You got that box. You opened it! You're going to sell it to Walsh! I'll pay you more. I must have it. I'll have you arrested——" Then he checked himself and tried to wipe out the threat of arrest by talking money again.

I assumed a pose of puzzlement and twisted from him the admission that the box contained papers that would ruin Walsh. But alas! Walsh had evidence that would injure the Cornwalls and ruin the name of his dead brother, who—another alas—was not alive to refute it.

I assured him with sincerity, and for the time convinced him, that I did not have a single paper or scrap of paper that belonged to his brother or referred to Walsh.

He wanted to know where Cora was. He wanted to get hold of the little black steel box. It contained valuable documents. He explained how it came to be in Cora's possession. That must be returned to him. What could she have done with it?

I could have told him what she had done with it, but I didn't. I could have told him that it was in my room, but I did not mention any such thing. I could have told him lots of things that would have surprized him—a few things, one at least, that would have nearly paralyzed him.

I demanded to know why he thought Ellis might hurt the girl.

Cornwall tried to be rather vague. He really did succeed in a way, but it seemed that Ellis had been enraged when she permitted him, Joseph Cornwall, to make her his heir.

Why should he have felt that way?

Cornwall was perturbed by the line of questioning. He evaded anything more definite than to say Ellis had always hated him because of Mrs. Ellis.

That old fellow had not had his legal training in vain. He was good at subtleties, lies and evasions. I could have rocked him, knocked the props from under him in twenty words, but there seemed to be no reason just then for crushing what little spirit—if not life—that he had left. The affair was far from being ended and I thought that after I had had a talk with Steve Ellis—if I could ever locate that fellow—I would know more of what I ought to do.

I may pause to admit that my income is not so large as I sometimes wish it, and on occasion I have been known to use a little of what looks suspiciously like blackmail. I haven't many weaknesses of sentiment, but two things always arouse my sympathies—sick dogs and crippled children. Before I finished with Joseph I expected to see a large subscription go to a certain children's hospital. Perhaps I would sell him the little black box. But more important motives than that were, of course, behind my interest.

I am fairly likely to want to meddle—though I do not always do so—wherever it appears that rank injustice has been done. I had not only liked Mrs. Ellis, I liked Cora also, and if she were coming into my family as Jack's wife, as there was no doubt that she would, for Jack was a youth who got what he wanted, I had good justification for taking the trouble to interfere in the complications that affected her.

VIII

MY JUSTIFICATION increased almost immediately. Somebody nearly killed Cora Ellis. She was, in spite of all that Jack could do, still living in that cheap rooming-house. Somebody entered the room at night and nearly fractured her skull with a blow. Her mother had been killed in the same way—a blow on the head while she lay in bed. But Cora was not killed, though her condition was serious—concussion of the brain, I believe the doctors said. She was carried to the hospital dangerously near death. Her name got into the papers. More than that, pretty much the whole story eventually got there.

Jack could then use his money to give her

comfort and help. If there had been anything she needed that money could not buy I suppose he would have gone out and stolen it. He got in a regiment of doctors and special nurses, had her put into a private room and made a fuss because it wasn't good enough. Also he ordered that nobody should be permitted to see her and had somebody on watch outside of her door as well as in. He was excited and thorough.

She had evidently been assaulted by some one intent upon recovering the little black steel box. Her whereabouts had probably been discovered by the simple method of shadowing Jack, who had visited her on an average of something like twice a day—perhaps only on an average of once, but had stayed the rest of the day, had gone out with her, carried her off to shows and cafés and succeeded a little in distracting her attention from the need of a job.

The room was ransacked but the little box was not found. She did not have it. She had given it to Jack to return to the Cornwalls. He had brought it home to wrap for a messenger, and I, with deceptive consideration, had told him I would attend to it for him.

It was a heavy little thing, being solidly built, and without a key one would have had trouble getting it open. Daniel Cornwall had evidently known that. I counted on his knowing. As he also knew very well what papers it had and as he could tell whether or not the lock had been tampered with, he had apparently had no occasion to look them over. Perhaps he had been too much of a miser to have a new key made. Anyway, I didn't get into it. I did not try.

I stowed it away with care in my own room. As a matter of principle—or lack of it, as you perfer—it is always well to have the joker up one's sleeve. That little box to me represented most emphatically the joker. I did rather wish that I could peep inside of it again, but it was too much trouble to have the sturdy little lock forced. Besides, not even Daniel Cornwall or Walsh knew better than I what it contained.

I wished very much to get in touch with Steve Ellis. For one thing, that blow intended for his daughter's head had a deadly similiarity to the other which had sent him to prison. There was only circumstantial evidence, it was true, but there seemed to be other reasons than inadequate evidence that had decided Walsh to sign his pardon.

Jack came home one evening with an air of excitement.

"Say, what'd you know about it? A gink showed up to-day and tried to raise a rumpus 'cause they wouldn't let 'im in. Said he was her father. No, it wasn't the Cornwall dyspeptic. He telephoned. I didn't see the fellow—told 'em if he showed up again to hold him and yell for the police. Cora's getting along fine, but no excitement, say the doctors. They've got to say something to make me think they're earning their money. But when they try to limit me to fifteen minutes—say, I'd like to know what business a doctor I'm payin' has got telling me how long I can talk to my girl! Oh, the father person? They told him to drop around tomorrow and see me."

Ellis did come around the next day, but the hospital people, in trying to follow Jack's advice about holding him and calling in the police, aroused his suspicions and he got away.

IX

THEN came one of those disagreeable surprizes that are sometimes called bolts out of a clear sky, though the sky had not, as one may judge from what has been told, seemed so very clear. Anyway, pretty much of the whole affair got into the newspapers, and on top of that Joseph Cornwall appeared to have tried to get security from Ellis by telling him that I had been known as Smithers in Salt Lake.

Ellis probably believed he had more reason to be jealous of me than of Joseph Cornwall and Ellis had no way of knowing at all that I had done him a bit of a service—or maybe that old scoundrel of a Joseph Cornwall had thought that by forcing Ellis' attention on me he would cause me to dispose of him.

I knew this had happened, because Ellis wrote me a very abusive letter saying he had found out that I was Smithers; that he didn't care how bad my reputation was as a gunman, he would get me and he wanted me to know it; that I would pay for having done Daniel Cornwall's dirty work.

It seems to be a very stupid characteristic of almost everybody bent on relieving a grudge, to send a warning—an abusive warning. I don't know why it is so but it is. I suppose it is related to the passion for abusing an enemy that is so marked in savages.

The only thing about the letter that gave me a second's pause—and it was a rather long letter, full of abuse and some illumination as to how he had discovered who I was—was the accusation that I had done Daniel Cornwall's dirty work. I supposed that Joseph had added that lie to draw Ellis' lightning more inevitably upon my head.

I was more irritated by the newspapers than by anything else. Jack, in a moment of idiocy, had let the reporters get the best of him. True enough, those fellows are likely to get the best of anybody, and it is no trick at all for a pack of them, sharp-eyed, wily-tongued, lightning-witted, to turn a young, emotional lover inside out. They had got him to talk about Cora. I won't say that he had sense enough not to tell them what she had heard when the Cornwalls had quarreled. He probably forgot that completely at the time. He told them pretty much everything else. He said that Cora's room had evidently been robbed in an effort to secure the little box of important papers which she had previously turned over to him and he had returned to the Cornwalls. No, he did not know what the box contained. He—the idiot—told of Cora's father and her semi-adoption by the millionaire Joseph Cornwall.

The newspapers flared. Joseph Cornwall denied having received the box. The papers clamored to know what was in it and speculated in headlines. The recent murder, or suicide, of Daniel was rehashed. By a system of elimination and deduction they concluded that I had the box. They were encouraged to this conviction by Joseph Cornwall, who seemed to have lost his own head too. I was always good copy.

All in all, it was a whale of a story. I was pestered for a statement but I said nothing. Long dispatches from Salt Lake added sensational information to the local stories. It was a muddle and a mess, and those hounds of the press left no stones unturned. I put on my best poker-face and let them guess what ever they would.

I did succeed in impressing upon Jack that he had made a fool of himself. I also told him that if he so much as breathed a word of what Cora had told him and me of why she fled the Cornwalls, I would see to it that she never did marry him in case, as was unlikely, she ever forgave him herself.

The papers were frantic to discover that point but they did not succeed. It was one matter upon which Joseph was equally desirous of silence. I gave out nothing to papers or to the police, and though the latter rather looked askance at me they did not make any formal inquiries. Joseph evidently did not want to take legal steps to recover the box and its contents, though he was now sure I was a liar since, for fear I might give the documents publicity, I had told him I had no papers of his, his brother's or of Walsh's. That would hit Walsh hardest, it is true, but it would also cause Walsh, Samson-like, to pull down the Cornwall reputation, if not even to do violence to Joseph himself.

I did not say anything to the newspapers or to the police even when Yang Li, the mute Chinaman who attended to the rather large apartment Jack and I shared, was knocked unconscious while answering a call at the door. Again that blow over the head—the same that had killed Mrs. Ellis, nearly killed Cora and, glancing a bit, narrowly spared Yang from more than a severe bump. True, three different men could have struck as many different blows, but it looked much as if some one was putting his trust in a club.

My rooms were searched. Had the party who invaded the apartment looked into the dictionary, which I had carefully hollowed out, he might have been satisfied, though I doubt it. Anyway he would have found the little black steel box just as I had received it.

On the same day I received a telegram from the secretary to the Governor of Utah. The governor had evidently been reading the papers and New York dispatches. The telegram requested me to meet the governor at such-and-such a hotel thirty minutes after his train arrived on the following Thursday.

Even I, who have had some experience in the ways of the world and its troubles, was beginning to feel a little bewildered at the rapidity with which complications were developing.

X

I WANTED to meet Steve Ellis. It had been made plain that he wanted to meet me, so nothing would have been more simple than the making of an appointment, if I had had known where he was or how to reach him. I doubted whether Ellis paid attention to the personals in the newspapers. He probably did not search them out as many city men do over

the breakfast coffee, young brokers and clerks hoping to find themselves somehow identified as the man the "lady in blue with the Merry Widow hat wishes to meet again," or some such romantic nonsense. Besides it would have been impossible to say much in such a personal without letting all the reporters in the city in on the appointment.

However, I thought I could use the reporters. I permitted them to think I was trying to retire, to evade them, to escape publicity, to hide, when I moved over to the Jersey side and took a modest little cottage such as I hoped would encourage midnight prowlers to come and call on me. The reporters, thinking of course that they had something that I did not want known, managed to get my new address into their follow-up stories on the Cornwall case. The important thing was that Jack—this time acting under instructions—intimated to them that the little black steel box went with me.

It had come to the point where it seemed that I would have to offer myself as bait to catch the sort of fish I was after. I had taken the small furnished cottage with an idea toward encouraging the sort of people who probably thought I did not want to see them, to pay me unexpected calls. I made a few minor alterations in the arrangement of the furniture and hangings and waited.

The first to come arrived boldly in the daylight. Yang Li, standing behind curtains near the door, took a long look at the fellow and shook his head. Yang was telling me that this was not the man who had cracked him over the head when he had opened the door two days before.

The man knocked and I called to him to come in. He hesitated but came. He was a person of no importance, probably a cross between a lawyer and a private detective, and had been sent by Joseph Cornwall to buy the little black box. He acted as if he were being vastly generous in offering ten thousand dollars for the box.

I said I would not consider less than thirty thousand dollars. He protested. I told him the price was now forty thousand dollars. He gasped. I assured him that the value of the box had gone up to fifty thousand. He almost shouted that I must be crazy. For the insult I added another ten thousand dollars. I always did think that I had the making of a financier in me. He offered forty thousand dollars but my price had jumped to seventy thousand dollars, and I was courteous enough to assure him that every attempt to bicker or beat down my price would make it rise again. He lost his temper, so I came out flatly for one hundred thousand dollars.

"Go back to Cornwall," I said, "and ask him how much he thinks I could get for the box by offering it at auction in Salt Lake!"

Of course the fellow did not know the story and value of the box but he was a little shaken. He thought his gift of legal rhetoric could influence me. He snapped "blackmailer" and the price mounted ten per cent. He began to get rattled and asked—

"You will take one hundred thousand then?"

"No," I told him, "it is one hundred and twenty thousand dollars now, and if you open your mouth to object again it will be one and thirty thousand dollars, so the best thing you can do is to get out!"

"But if my client wants to pay it?" he almost wailed. Evidently he had been instructed to get the box if money could buy it.

"Then tell him to come in person—in person, mind you—next Thursday at 2:35 promptly, with a cashier's check for one hundred and thirty thousand dollars made out to Mr. J. C. Collins, to the Suite C of the Treborne Hotel. He is to notify me by tomorrow whether or not he will accept, or else I may offer my box for sale in Salt Lake."

Mr.—or rather Dr.—J. C. Collins was a friend of mine, and a devoted enthusiast who gave all of his time and most of his money to the Star of Hope hospital, an institution for crippled children. And bless his soul, he had no scruples about tainted money. He believed that when it went into bandages and braces for children even the smell of coal oil would be cleansed from it.

I had already engaged the suite as a fitting place to let the governor of Utah interview me. Maybe he had already taken by telegraph the precaution of engaging a room, maybe not. He was no doubt a little excited. Anyway, it would make no difference.

XI

THE following afternoon, Thursday, we had another visitor. It seemed that in spite of my calculations and rather queer precautions our visitors were coming in the daylight.

Yang, from his tireless station behind the curtains, saw the man walk hesitantly up and down the sidewalk before our house and glance continually, indecisively toward it. Yang attracted my attention and I peeked through a corner of the window. That was undoubtedly a fellow I wanted to see.

I hurried to a chair and sprawled in it. Shortly I heard a hard rap on the door. I called out—

"Come in!"

The door did not open. I called out again.

Then it opened slowly and Mr. Steve Ellis filled the doorway.

He was a big man with sharp, definite features, slow in his movements and deliberate. He did not need to speak for one to know that he was embittered. But his voice, though not loud, had a kind of husky insolence. He wore a felt hat of light gray that he took off reluctantly in the doorway. He was a little uneasy but not nervous. His fingers were steady. His coat was of dark brown material and double-breasted. He closed the door by reaching out behind his back and did not take his eyes off me.

"Won't you sit down?" I asked.

"No."

He glanced about a little furtively. No one was in sight. My hands rested on the arms of the chair.

"You are Mr. Ellis, I believe. I've been expecting you."

He made a slight start of surprize.

"Yes. I'm Steve Ellis. You are that fellow Smithers?"

It was a cross between an accusation and a question.

"I've used that name. Yes."

"And you call yourself Everhard, too?"

Again the suggestion of a question with an undertone of contempt.

"You came looking for trouble?" I asked.

That rather surprized him but after a pause, after a moment of study, he said between clenched teeth:

"Yes, you dirty little tin-horn four-flusher, I come lookin' for trouble. I'm going to give you the beatin' of your life."

I did not move, though he leaned forward as if to rush. With a suggestion of sarcasm I replied:

"I see. You find out that a man weighs about fifty pounds less than you and decide to beat him up. I believe that the prison system is designed to teach a man such caution, is it not?"

He replied by swearing at me and bracing himself as if to jump. He was considerate enough, however, to tell me that there was just one way that I could escape being beaten-up—that was to give him the little black steel box.

"Indeed?"

He cursed me. He was rather infuriated because I did not seem to be frightened. He told me that he would have killed me but he had promised the Governor not to kill anybody.

"I see. Governor Walsh let you out on condition that you would steal for him."

"You keep that talk up and I'll——"

He did not finish what he would do. He stopped.

"Just why do you think you would like to try to kill me?"

He assured me that I knew, and then went on to mention his wife.

"And so," I said coldly, "you killed her?"

"I did not!" he shouted. "I never touched her! God, I loved her!"

I told him that a lot of love he must have had when he eagerly believed lies that made her out to be disreputable.

"Don't preach to me!" he cried.

"Preach to you? Preach to the devil, sir. If it be preaching to say that you are a jealous coward and cur, make the most of it. You had only one friend while you were in the pen and that was your wife. And when you came out you killed her because she had to let rooms to keep from going hungry, and you bargain with a crooked governor for a pardon."

He threw back his coat and jerked at a gun-handle.

"Of course you are ready to shoot a man you think unarmed."

I had not moved. My legs were extended before the chair; my hands were on the chair's arms.

"Try it and see how many policemen pounce on to you."

He looked about hurriedly. I smiled.

"You are very simple and a little stupid. Don't you know the police are looking for you? Don't you know I came here so you would think it was easy to find me alone. I got your letter and your threats. Do you think I would be here alone to receive a—a—wife-murderer?"

AGAIN he cursed me, but he did not offer to shoot. He rammed the gun angrily into the holster and looked about, a little dazed.

"I didn't kill Dan Cornwall," he said with something of hopelessness in his voice.

He had read the papers. He knew why the police wanted him.

I asked him just what he had meant by saying that I did Daniel Cornwall's dirty work, and got out of him the belief that I had been one of Cornwall's gun-fighters. He had several of them to jump copper claims and that sort of thing. Who had told him that I did Cornwall's dirty work? Why, one of the guard in the penitentiary—the same guard that had told him stories about his wife. The guard knew me for one of Cornwall's spies and gunmen.

Cornwall had showed a good deal of cunning when he bought that guard.

"Do you know how you came to be paroled that time? You were paroled, weren't you? Pardoned then, too. You seem to be rather fortunate in getting pardons."

He said that he had been sent over on a frame-up, that he had been in Cornwall's employ and refused to carry out some crooked work. A friend of his had had a claim; Cornwall wanted it jumped. Ellis said that he had sworn he would stand by his friend. Cornwall had trumped up a theft charge and sent him over.

I asked why he had supposed that the fellow called Smithers would have killed the man Taggart, sent to burglarize Mrs. Ellis' house, if he too had been one of Cornwall's men.

He didn't, or said he didn't, know Taggart had been sent by Cornwall. He claimed that he didn't know what Taggert had been after, that he had thought Taggart was after Smithers.

I called him a liar and he quivered as if jabbed with a hot piece of iron.

"Do you know how you came to get out of prison that time?"

"Walsh—he was attorney-general then—tipped off the governor. He knew about the frame-up on me. Walsh told me himself—this last time."

By digging into him with questions I discovered—though I was, for a moment, rather of the opinion that he lied—that Mrs. Ellis had sent word only that she had got hold of something that would help toward his pardon. He never knew what it was. His wife had been killed the day he got out. I knew very well that he had not killed her and was rather predisposed to favor his side of the case, though in my opinion it was not much worse to murder a wife than to believe a blackguard's lies about her.

She had not, he said, told him of having the little steel box Cornwall so treasured, though he had been with her most of the day. That night he had gone down-town to see a man about a job. After the man had refused to give him the job, he walked about the streets for hours, worried and brooding. When he got home his wife was dead. He couldn't explain where he had been. The guard in the penitentiary swore he, Ellis, had said he would get both his wife and that fellow Smithers.

Ellis admitted he had threatened Smithers—never his wife.

The ways of woman are strange, incomprehensible. I could not understand why Mrs. Ellis had not mentioned the black box to him, but I eventually learned—or learned enough to surmise—that Daniel Cornwall had, when she was using it as a lever to make him pry Ellis from the prison, exacted from her the promise to tell no one that she had it. She had kept her promise.

It appeared, from what I also learned, that Mrs. Ellis, who had no liking for the Cornwalls and wisely trusted them not at all, had said she would not surrender the box until Daniel Cornwall admitted that he had framed-up the case against her husband. That is a rather important point as explaining many things that would otherwise be obscure. She was perfectly right in her attitude. She was a fine woman.

In the course of our talk Ellis acknowledged unconsciously, by his manner, that I had rather bluffed him. He sat down and fumbled with his hat brim. He answered my questions with a kind of monotonous hopelessness of tone as if it were useless to think of fighting his luck.

I next found how he had come to know that Cornwall set such store by the box.

"You told Mrs. Ellis that if it could be got, Cornwall could be made to do anything. How did you know it?"

HE explained that once he, Cornwall and Cornwall's secretary were taking a little trip, and the secretary carried the little black box.

"If you ever get in trouble with the old

man," said the secretary half-jokingly at first, "get your mits on to this box. I mean it, Steve. Nobody's ever seen the inside of it as I know of. Between you and me, I think the old man's got the dope on somebody and he thinks more of this box than of his bank-account. I am giving you a real tip, Steve. Just nail this box if you see trouble coming. But the old man never lets it get far away from him."

I thought that over carefully and concluded that it might be true, then changed the conversation to Joseph Cornwall.

"That skunk!" Ellis exclaimed. "He spread around that I was a drunk and I don't know what all. I've been drunk. Every man has. He tried to get my wife to leave me; then he got my daughter. How do you suppose a man feels having his daughter take up with skunks like that just because they're rich? Her mother would disown her and her mother loved her more than anything on earth."

His voice almost broke at that.

"Ellis," I told him, more gently than I usually speak to any one, "most men's troubles in this world come because they trust women. You've caught it the other way round. Cora never knew the truth about the Cornwalls. Your wife never told her, at least not enough to brace her up against their lies and what she mistook for generosity. You see, they are a bad lot, but Joseph knows he's sick and likely to die one of these days, and a little bit of conscience has been fermenting down inside him. Maybe he did hoodwink himself into believing that he really loved Mrs Ellis—though I doubt it—and so wanted to show kindness to her daughter.

"But let me tell you this: Cora went out of that house just as soon as she found what kind of a deal they had framed up against you. She found out some other things, too, Ellis, and I'm not going to tell you or anybody till the telling means something more than mere information, but she wants you; she wants you more than she does a rich cousin of mine who is trying to marry her. Now who do you suppose could have struck her over the head?"

He answered promptly that it was some one of the Cornwalls' dirty-workers and hurried on to insist that I tell him everything about Cora.

We had a long talk about one thing and another, and in the course of the conversation I told him that I knew positively that Mrs. Ellis had been given the little black box at the time she was working for his pardon. He doubted me.

"Couldn't some of your friends have got it for her?"

"Mister—" he fumbled over my name, not knowing what to call me, and repeated—"Mister, I ain't got any friends. None of 'em would have done anything for me. Walsh—it's some stuff on him that Cornwall had in that box—he told me he wasn't doing it for friendship. He said Cornwall had some evidence that would ruin him, but he'd got to the place where Cornwall could ruin and be——. He said he was going to come clean. There was an awful roar over his pardoning me, but he said he was convinced I hadn't touched my wife and that he was going to follow his conscience, and the Cornwalls and everybody else could go to the devil."

"You are sure of that?"

"I know it. He said it to me right in his own office. He said the Cornwalls had been afraid, ever since he got in office, that he would cut lose and get 'em. That's why they got out of Utah—but they could ruin him. 'That little black box will be my coffin,' he said. And I knew right away what he meant. I remembered from the time when I'd seen it.

"You see, mister, Cornwall sent him a picture of that box and a key once and a note—Walsh told me all about it—saying he wanted Walsh to have a key to that box, 'cause what was in it really belonged to him and he might want to open it sometime in court to show what a fine, up-standing citizen he was. Sarcastic note, it was. Walsh told me all about it. He was excited. And when I saw in the papers all about you having it, I thought I could do the governor a good turn. Besides, old Joe Cornwall told me you was Smithers.

"I don't know why I'm telling all this to you. I'm no friend of yours—'cept if you *have* been good to my girl. Now call in the —— police you've got stuck around here. I thought I'd fight it out if I ever got cornered again, but I'll give up. I'm innocent this time too, though I wish to God I was guilty! I'd give my soul any day to kill Dan Cornwall."

I assured him that he was unduly agitated — that there were no police about.

He was dazed a little at that and stared around.

I told him that if he wished to do something for the governor to be at the Treborne Hotel, Suite C, Thursday at 2.35 P.M.

"Be there promptly, and come right in. I'll give you the little black steel box and you can give it to the governor. He'll be there, too. Now don't look at me that way. You know it isn't a trap. As for traps, if my little, withered old Chinese servant hadn't shaken his head as you came up the walk, you would now know how it feels to to trapped. You see, somebody hit him over the head recently, and we are waiting for that person to call again. I rather wondered if, after all, it had not been you."

A little grateful, much bewildered and scarcely knowing whether or not he was dreaming, Ellis got out of the house. In his hand he carried a little slip of paper upon which I had written his Thursday's appointment. He would at least have that to assure him that he had not been dreaming.

XII

I COULD have told him that Cora had been doing fine. I did tell him that without adding that she had been out for a ride in Jack's limousine the day before. I could have told him some other things that would have been of extreme importance, but when one has for so many years kept his own counsel and arranged his little affairs with an eye for the dramatic—perhaps for the melodramatic—one is likely to have no scruples about keeping from people things they have a right to know.

When Joseph Cornwall sent me word that he would meet me at the Treborne, I sent back as an answer that he would do nothing of the kind unless the cashier's check had been put into my hands. I was pretty sure that he would not send the money beforehand, though in that answer I conveyed that I had already got in touch with other interested parties out West. I wanted, however, to be sure to have Joseph at the hotel. I should have perferred to have had Daniel Cornwall, of course.

There are various ways of getting what one wants, and though many of my most carefully laid plans have been futile, I have occasionally been quite successful. For one thing, I have never hesitated in life or in the lesser gamble of games defined by Hoyle, to play with marked cards. That may seem a contemptible thing to admit, but I never saw an honest poker-player yet who wasn't eventually trimmed by cheaters.

Though, by way of keeping my hand in with a revolver, I toss pennies into the air and hit them, yet I do not go about picking quarrels with quiet, honest folk, and, though I can do some very nearly unbelieveable things with cards, I have never yet cleaned out a man who played honestly. Understand me, for I have no desire to whitewash myself. If a man who can afford to lose gets into a game and he is no personal friend of mine and I happen to have some use for more money than I have, he is pretty likely to complain of his luck.

But to get back to my story: By Wednesday evening I had begun to feel a little impatient. As I had been doing every evening, I left the doors unlocked, the rear windows open and the screen unlatched. I drew the blinds and rigged out a kind of dummy that threw a passible silhouette against the shade, while Yang hovered in the shadows of the front porch, sheltered by vines, and I lurked patiently as an Indian in the pantry.

As usual, nothing came of our precautions, so about ten o'clock, with much care in case we were being watched, the dummy was dismantled. I took its place for a moment then arose and went into my bedroom and undressed. Then Yang turned out the lights.

Whoever has watched the night out, sleeplessly listening—I care not how strong his nerves—evokes a feeling of the eerie. With every sense strained to catch sounds, one hears much creaking and rustling, and it is very easy to believe in ghosts. Phantoms seem to flicker in the darkness before one's tense eyes, and the over-alert ears report all manner of faint, suspicious noises. I was alone in the house, not that being alone at all disturbed me, but even I, who am sometimes thought to be without emotion, am much more susceptible than I will admit to the startling effect of solitary and tense darkness. Each night after he turned out the lights, Yang left the house, and had any one taken the trouble to follow him, that person would have been convinced that he did not return until morning, for Yang was very subtle and elusive.

On that Wednesday night I was more tense than ever, for on previous nights I had

very nearly exhausted my imagination by wondering what could and might have happened at the multiple appointments I planned at the Treborne. Besides, this was my last night before those appointments were to be kept and all whom I wanted to be present had not been invited.

Around one o'clock I heard something a little more marked than the usual inexplicable creaking that gave me many false thrills—the silence. My imagination had played a trick or, at least, I so accused it.

The sky was cloudy and there was neither moon nor stars. The room was inky but one's eyes grow vaguely accustomed to the thickest blackness. Again the creaking as of a cautious foot placed on the back porch, then silence—an interminable silence. I bent forward, ears strained, and for the briefest of moments I caught a vague streak of light that sifted beneath the door. Somebody was in the house. He had moved with infinite caution and silence. Again silence; the person was listening. I held my breath for a second or two, fearful that he might become alarmed and retreat.

Then I knew—I could not see, I scarcely heard—that the door into my bedroom was opening. It did not creak. I had oiled it with care and also taken the precaution of laying rugs and mats where it seemed they would be most likely to serve the intruder's purpose. After the door opened, the prowler stood for many minutes—silent, waiting, listening. He had the patience of a hunting animal.

Then came an almost noiseless step nearer to the bed—distinguished a little by the white spread. I could catch the faint creaks of the strained boards—there are few floors that do not creak a little. One may live in a house for years and never know it, but turn out the lights and try to move inaudibly across the room and the boards seem maliciously to squeak a warning, though it really may be impossible for one in the next room to hear.

Step by step, with a full minute or two after each short advance, the figure came nearer and nearer to the bed. There was a pause as he stood at the foot; then he half crouched and came alongside, inch by inch. I am by nature rather unemotional, seldom nervous, but I felt a queer little chill pass along my back as I wondered whether he would strike with club or knife.

At last there flashed on the bed a blinding stream of light from an electric torch. With incredible swiftness the man brought down the uplifted, loaded cane against the pillow. There was a dull crunching, smashing sound, and the torch was shut off. The blow had shattered the little mannikin, and at that instant I switched on the light.

"Thank you," I said with extreme politeness.

THE man looked like a preacher. Had the earth given way under his feet and landed him before the satanic throne he could not have been more stunned. I stood there, my hands empty, smiling, thanking him. His clothes were black and formal; he wore a stiff white shirt and a little black clerical tie; his rather leathery, flabby face wore side-whiskers; a parochial black hat was on his head; he was in his stocking feet. His mouth was open and his hands and arms were frozen into a gesture of recoil; amazement and terror burned in his widened eyes.

"Thank you," I repeated, "for taking the trouble to prove to me precisely what I suspected. First there was Mrs. Ellis, then Cora, then my Chinaman and now myself. Each time all because of a little black box which no honest man would give ten cents for, and——"

Wordless, he hurled himself at me, the loaded cane coming down. I stepped to one side, snatched at the holster fastened to the curtains behind which I had been standing and in the twinkling of a second had reminded him of the fate that befell Taggart when engaged on a similar errand some years before.

At my suggestion he dropped the cane to the floor; then he cursed me. When he paused I urged him to go on, explaining to him that I enjoyed listening to compliments. Naturally that made him more furious. In the awkward way that men have when unaccustomed to the use of guns, he pushed back his coat and tugged at his hip pocket. I had replaced my own in the holster and I did not take the trouble to reach for it. I sharply told him to put up his hands. Had he refused I probably would have killed him.

"Look here," I began, business-like. "I don't want to hurt you. I'm not going to call the police. Now put your hands down and keep your fingers away from your hip pocket and let us talk things over like sensible men."

My words and attitude were almost as bewildering a surprize as when I had turned on the light.

"Why do you suppose I've held up that box?" I demanded. "Hasn't it been very apparent that I needed money? Outside of some people like you and the governor of Utah, who is not rich, who would bid for it? I move off to an obscure little house and get the address put into the papers, so you could the more easily find it."

"How did you know—" he began, his voice shaking.

"I knew you would come. You went to Mrs. Ellis, to Cora, to my Chinaman."

"How did you know—" he began again, but I interrupted him.

"All that is of no importance. Let's talk of money. My price is now one hundred and thirty thousand dollars for the box. Will you pay it?"

He protested that it would be impossible. Having got on to familiar ground—money matters—he became a bargainer. I told him that it would no doubt be inconvenient but not impossible. Anyway, for that sum I would put the box into his hands, unopened, and just as it was when he had seen it last. Otherwise it would be refused him.

We argued, or rather he did. I said he could fix up whatever explanation pleased him to satisfy his lawyers and bank, but I had to have the money, cash, by tomorrow, or rather by this afternoon. I told him he would have to be at Suite C of the Treborne Hotel at 2:50 promptly. How did he know it wasn't a trap? He knew it very well, I told him, because he could not imagine how I could possibly lay a better trap than the one in which he had just been caught. I explained that I knew very well he would come, for, since I was on to his secret, not even millions could save him from exposure unless he silenced me and got his box.

"You don't dare run off and hide and lose your identity altogether, for you are an old man—not in the best of health, either, are you? No, and you would be hounded out and couldn't touch your money without revealing your true identity and couldn't reveal that without being caught."

As a matter of fact, the elusive and subtle Yang did return each night after his seeming departure, to patiently stand watch for the purpose of shadowing any one who left house. Yang could have shadowed a ghost, so I was not taking nearly the risk that I seemed to be in letting the clerical gentleman go his way.

"How did you know—" he began for the third time, as if obsessed with some peculiar desire for information. But again I cut the question short, half-maliciously.

"I know much more than most people give me credit for. For instance I know that you will be at the Treborne this afternoon with the money. Don't interrupt me. I know you will be there, for this evening I expect to have dinner with the governor of Utah. Yes, if you hadn't been too—I don't know whether to call it cunning or stingy—to have kept your private detectives in Salt Lake telegraphing news, you would have known that he left quietly for New York recently. Yes or no? Will you be there at 2:50, sharp? Yes or no?"

"Yes," he said huskily.

Though he was a double-dyed liar and criminal, I felt sure that he would keep the appointment. Though he might not intend to keep it, I felt sure that he would be there. I like to plan little dramatic affairs and in this case I had taken certain precautions. Anyway, he promised.

He brought in his shoes from the back porch, put them on and left by the front door at about three o'clock.

I went to bed and sleep, very contented with myself and full of faith in the slim, wraith-like Chinaman who, though I had not seen or signaled to him, I knew was following the clerical figure and would follow no matter where or which way he went.

XIII

I FOUND an hour, or maybe not so long a time as that, of Thursday afternoon quite interesting. There were one or two little variations to my plans, but nothing of importance.

Joseph Cornwall arrived before any of my other guests. He came with two or three private detectives and a lawyer, obviously intending to trap me in a little game of blackmail. I knew that was in the air almost as soon as I saw him creeping from the automobile, solicitously assisted by two fellows who could no more have proclaimed themselves detectives if they had worn their tin badges as shirt studs instead of concealing them under their coats.

An experienced blackmailer like myself understands pretty much the risks he must

take. In spite of my assurance that I would not meet him unless he had previously delivered one hundred and thirty thousand dollars into my hands, he came, and I had not yet received the money. I really hadn't expected to get it, for one must demand a great deal more in this world than one hopes for. I mean I had not expected to get it in advance, for Joseph Cornwall, being a certain kind of rich man, would not part with money without some hope not only of getting what he bargained for, but of getting back what he paid.

His two detectives and the lawyer—not the same little flunkey-like lawyer person that had called on me, but another, a more important-looking legal person—whispered in the lobby for a moment, then followed the bell-boy who came forward and offered to show them to Suite C. The bell-boy was intelligent and attending to business, as I noticed from my place behind the palms.

Joseph and his party were scarcely out of sight before Steve Ellis came in nervously, looking a little lost but having made up his mind to see it through—whatever it might be.

I went up to him and asked him to sit down and wait a minute. I told him that Governor Walsh had already arrived and was in his room, that the governor would be down in a few minutes looking for me, as I had sent up word that I was waiting. I asked Ellis to receive the governor for me and—I glanced at my watch—

"Bring him up to Suite C in just eight minutes."

"But I thought——"

"Don't think," I told him. "It isn't necessary today. Have the governor up there in eight minutes."

I left him and hurried up-stairs.

I met Jack watching for me in the hall. He was excited but trying not to be.

"I'm afraid the nervous shock—" he began.

"What? A Richmond afraid?" I taunted him. "Don't worry. Your own doctors have told me it would be all right. Besides, Dr. Lingard has a proper dramatic sense—rather unusual in a physician."

I had no sooner said that than Dr. J. C. Collins of the Children's Hospital—a tall, alert, tense fellow with a kind of sad humor in his eyes, always in his eyes—elbowed Jack aside and almost trembling in excitment said:

"Look here, Don Everhard. Are you sure we're not going too far this time? If I should be arrested—scandal—hurt the hospital you know. Need the money, but——"

"Have you got your machine ready? The driver's ready to go? All set?"

"Yes, but ——"

I silenced him with a gesture and said:

"Every bed in your hospital is a battlefield. Are you going to run the chance of losing a lot of battles there for fear of a little risk here, now?"

That touched his weakest spot. He was really a fanatic over his children and he did need money. Had he had billions, that lover of children, that crusader against treacherous, cowardly diseases that attacked babies and children, would still have needed money. He clinched his long, sensitive surgical fingers and said tensely:

"Go on! I'll go through with it!"

I STEPPED into Suite C and closed the door. In my most business-like manner I faced the little delegation and cast a quick look at the burly-faced detective who lounged idly against the table, his elbow on a large dictionary.

Joseph Cornwall was sitting in a deep plush chair, and the rather pompous legal person was close beside him, whispering into the nervous old millionaire's ear.

"The money!" I said bluntly.

The lawyer person glanced right and left at the two detectives. They straightened up and took a step forward—waited—then he began to speak. That is, he cleared his throat, paused impressively and then began to say that he represented his client.

"The money or the cashier's check—now, or I go out of that door. You should have sent it before."

The lawyer—his name was Parsons—began to ask me if I was sure that I really wanted the bargain to go on.

I cut him with a dozen words, saying that if I wanted his advice I would have engaged him.

That made him angry and he puffed. The determination to make me regret my impudence came over his face and stayed there.

"You will kindly sign this receipt," he said, offering me a piece of paper.

"I sign no receipt until the money is paid."

"Yet," he said with a swelling of his

chest, "you expect my client to pay his money out without being assured of receiving the object of purchase."

"He can have the object all right."

"How do we know, sir?" demanded Parsons with further expanse of chest.

"Because I said so."

"Oh!"

It was an insulting as he could make it.

"The governor of Utah is in this hotel. I meet him in five minutes. If I haven't your money by that time, you, Cornwall, will probably go to the penitentiary for perjury and conspiracy—for sheltering a guilty man when you knew that Steve Ellis was innocent of the murder of his wife!"

That was a turn in the affairs that had not been expected. Cornwall started out of his chair shivering, and his thin hands gestured frightenedly as he said—

"Pay him—pay him—quick!"

Mr. Parsons handed me a check, a cashier's check for one hundred and thirty thousand dollars, and held out the receipt.

The check was made out, as I had insisted, to J. C. Collins. Parsons thought it was my alias or one of them.

I scrawled a signature of some kind onto the paper, but my eyes were on the detectives.

No sooner had I dropped the pen than they, awaiting their cues, stepped forward.

"The box, sir!" demanded Parsons.

"Look up the word box in that dictionary," I taunted them. "It's there."

In a sort of stupid bewilderment all eyes turned toward the large book.

"I might have known it, I might have known it!" Cornwall squeaked. "All is lost!"

"All is not lost," cried the Parsons person Napoleonically. "That scoundrel—" he leveled an accusing finger at me— "shall pay for this! Officers, do your duty!"

"Yes, officers, do!" I said, for I had seen what was coming as far off as one sees a headlight. "Put up your hands!"

They stepped back, their hands going upward, for there was a gun in each one of mine.

I moved to the door. carefully laid one gun at my feet, opened the door and without looking around thrust out the check.

"Everything's going fine," I said without looking around. "You've just got time to get to the bank—if you hurry. I don't think they'll want to stop payment on it but you can never tell."

Dr. Collins had not paused to hear all I said. He was gone. I closed the door, picked up the other gun, swiftly searched the detectives and stood them up where I could watch then with the least effort.

"Cornwall," I said, "you probably thought you could get the dead woman to have God forgive you if you stole her daughter—took the girl away from a father whom you knew to be innocent of all the crimes that threw him repeatedly into the penitentiary. That is all you know about women, living or dead. Personally, I have an idea that her spirit kept nagging at the conscience of Governor Walsh until he was roused to dare do what he knew was right. No, I'm not religious but I believe in the devil. How can one help it when such things as you, with the protection and aid of fellows like Parsons here and these fat dicks, cumber the earth. Your box is in that dictionary. If you want it, look it up. I promised it and I usually keep my promises, even to rich crooks."

Parsons, puffing and angry, began oratorically to warn me of what was due to happen to me and to explain how I could not escape. He was interrupted by a knock on the door.

"Come in," I said.

The door opened and Steve Ellis and Governor Walsh, amazement scrawled across their faces, came in slowly.

"There is one more to come," I reminded the boy who had showed them in.

"Yes, sir."

"Then notify Mr. Richmond—you remember?"

"Yes, sir."

I closed the door and turned around to look with complacence upon my little private drama which was progressing quite well for an impromptu rehearsal.

THE two detectives against the wall had their hands up. That there might not be any mistake as to their identity, when I searched I had taken the precaution of causing them to move their large badges into a more conspicuous position and remarked:

"What a fine advertisement this will be for your agency when it gets into the papers. Everything relating to Cornwall and myself, you know, gets into the papers." There they stood, nearly bursting with shame.

Joseph shivered in the deep plush chair, and Mr. Parsons rocked back and forth, glaring passionately from toe to heel. He

was doing his best to look impressive, though he was a little handicapped by the circumstances.

Governor Walsh was a solid man with something of the typical politician on his face and something more, too—some indication of the man that he might have been had he not for so many years placed career before conscience. I doubted not at all that he had made many compromises, yet to his credit it must be said that though he had not been afraid to attack the Cornwalls openly, he had never tried to make friends with them secretly.

"What is the meaning of this, sir?" demanded the governor with dignity.

"It's a little reception committee, sir. By the way, governor, I have been having a little dispute with these gentlemen over the word box. I believe you are interested in the subject too. Mr. Daniel Cornwall was once sardonic enough to send you a photograph and a key. Ellis, would you mind looking up box in the dictionary?"

Ellis stared at me as if sure that I was crazy, so did the governor and every one else. I may have fancied it, but it seemed to me the detectives stretched their arms a little higher, as if realizing that I was crazy and might shoot, though I had put my guns away and tossed theirs across the room into a closet.

I insisted, though with a certain lightness of tone, that Ellis open the dictionary.

He hesitated, then went forward and laid his hands on the book. The room was silent, all were hushed—so the sudden knock on the door was like thunder. I spoke. The door opened and I called to Ellis—

"That dictionary, man; open it!"

Steve Ellis turned the book and exposed the box. At the same moment my intelligent bell-boy, with a hearty grin and an impudent, "In you go, old top," shoved the reluctant man through the doorway. The boy pulled the door shut and was gone.

"Mr. Daniel Cornwall, gentleman," I said, bowing toward the frightened figure, still in his clerical sideburns and black clothes. He carried a satchel in his hand.

That satchel contained an enormous amount of cash, but, as a matter of fact, Daniel Cornwall did not intend it for me. He had, in thinking over the interview of the previous night, decided to get together what money he could and permanently disappear—or perhaps some time later try to get his hands on his fortune. Anyway, he had that afternoon purchased a ticket when a little, noiseless Chinaman thrust a card into his hand. The card, addressed to Cornwall, advised him that he would be arrested if he took another step in any direction except toward Suite C of the Treborne Hotel.

So it was that surprize after surprize had broken in that room. Daniel Cornwall shuffled furtively and turned toward the door but realized that he could not make a break. Joseph raised himself out of his chair, then fell back whispering huskily—

"Daniel!"

Mr. Parsons looked about, blinking and trying not to appear as if he were dreaming, but it wouldn't have taken much to convince him that he was. Fat, well-fed lawyers do not believe that such things as were happening then do happen outside of nightmares. Steve Ellis crouched slightly and hate leaped to his face. Governor Walsh stared incredulously, for Daniel Cornwall would not have seemed so out of place, so unreal, in his winding sheet as in this clerical dress.

I had no time to waste. Dick Richmond would soon be coming into the room.

"Mr. Cornwall," I said agreeably, "I have reason to believe that you haven't looked into this box for some time. Will you open it?"

He stared at me dully for a moment, then anger came to his eyes. He realized how completely he had been trapped. I had told him that he could not imagine a more effective trap than the one which had caught him the night before and it was his own lookout if he couldn't.

"Oh, perhaps you never found the key I flung from the window? Governor Walsh, was it not for some such emergency as this that you were presented with a key? Will you be good enough to use it?"

The governor looked at me hard and his brain worked quickly. He jammed his hand into his pocket and pulled a key ring out, fingered the keys for a moment and, selecting one, reached toward the box with a determined air.

Joseph Cornwall actually sprang from his chair, with two trembling feeble hands outthrust:

"It is mine. Everhard! Mr Parsons! Please, officers, I have paid for this box!"

"Yes," I affirmed, "and for its contents. You see, Mr. Parsons, that here in the presence of witnesses— Gentlemen—" I spoke

to the detectives, who had taken their hands down but still held their places by the wall—"I call on you to bear witness that Mr. Cornwall affirms the transaction. So, Mr. Parsons, you must change your mind about charging me with blackmail."

THE key did not work easily; the lock was a difficult one. As the governor, a little excitedly, turned and wrenched—it was only a matter of seconds—all drew nearer, craning their necks.

The lid was lifted. Daniel made a movement as if to snatch at the contents, but his hands stopped as though he had suddenly come upon a snake. The governor too drew back amazed and looked at me.

"Yes, yes," I said, "it is empty, but you see when I got my hands on it five years ago—borrowed it one night from Mr. Cornwall here—" Daniel, suddenly enlightened as to who had robbed him of the box five years before, cursed under his breath—"I took the liberty of destroying certain criminal evidence against a gentleman it is needless to mention. How did I know what had been put into the box since or how valuable was its contents? Mr. Cornwall there—" I indicated Joseph—"offered me a very handsome price and his brother has also pledged himself to give me——"

I cast significant glances at the satchel.

Unfortunately I never got any of the money he had there. That was one place where my scheme fell down, but I was somewhat compensated by the expressions on the faces of the men about me. For five years the man who was the governor of Utah had lived in fear and trembling of an empty box. At any moment of that time, had he, as he eventually did do, let his conscience get the better of his judgment, he could have smashed the Cornwalls and come off unscratched. For five years the two cunning brothers had nursed an empty box as their talisman. So sure had Daniel been that none could open it without a key, that he had not taken the trouble of having another key made to investigate its contents. He had seen me close the box with the papers in it.

I explained to the governor in as few words as I could how I had stolen the box, to whom I had given it and why, five years before. When I had finished, he was silent, staring at me. Then he said that he had heard of me, but he had doubted a great deal of what he had heard. He believed now that he had been wrong to doubt. I felt sorry for Steve Ellis at that moment, for he had listened and, listening, he understood a great deal that possibly he would not have believed had he heard it at any other time, under any other conditions. His face was an apology, his lips trembled. He said nothing.

The atmosphere of the room was so tense that no one had noticed that the door stood open, nor who stood there, listening, waiting.

I had kept a watchful lookout from the corner of my eye on Daniel Cornwall, though he stood perhaps some ten feet from me, but at that he came near to fooling me because he had his gun in the side trouser's pocket instead of in the hip pocket. He jerked it out and leveled it, not at me but at the governor. Perhaps he intended the next shot for me—perhaps a third even for Ellis.

The bursting roar of two guns, exploding almost at once, filled the room, detonated through the hall and set the hotel into a commotion. I had shot with nothing more than split seconds to work on, but the gun went from his hands just as he pulled the trigger and his hand was shattered. By one of those odd chances of luck, the bullet struck the little steel box and ricocheted into the dictionary.

"If you had pointed it at your own head I wouldn't have interrupted you," I said coldly, glancing past him to the doorway. To the detectives I said:

"There is some work for you. Arrest him for the murder of Mrs. Steven Ellis!"

"That's a lie!" Joseph screamed, starting up. At that moment of crisis, brother-love, family blood and sharing of loot on dirty deals stood stronger in him than his pretended love for the dead woman. Joseph was an adroit scoundrel—ten times more adroit, though less aggressive and daring than his brother. He had at one time practically convinced me that he believed Steve Ellis had murdered her.

"That's a lie!" he cried. "Who accuses him? You?" He glared contemptuously at me.

I pointed toward the doorway.

There, a little pale, rather thin but tense, determined, Cora stood, with Jack beside her, looking as if he was ready to fight the world.

"Yes, I do!" she said almost in a whisper,

but a whisper that carried. "Yes, I heard everything you and he—" a finger went out toward Daniel Cornwall—" said that night when you quarreled over what it was best to do since Quiller had told you who Mr. Everhard was. You thought it would be easy to keep Mr. Everhard fooled by not running away—by devising some story to tell him. You said he couldn't possibly know that Taggart had been sent by Daniel to rob my mother. I heard all you said—both of you said!"

XIV

THAT'S about all there is to tell. Everybody in the hotel seemed trying to get into the room. Two house detectives did, and between them and the detectives of the private agency they carried the trembling, shivering, protesting Daniel Cornwall off to jail. He might beat the murder charge, but there was no doubt that he had tried to kill the governor of Utah, and there are some things that not even a multimillionaire can do with inpunity.

I didn't get anything out of that satchel. The officers took charge of it and, so far as I know, it eventually reverted to the Cornwall estate. I had a very hard time prying ten thousand dollars loose from Dr. Collins. He could absorb a lot of reasons and argument without being in the least effected, but finally he was persuaded to write out a check for that amount to Steve Ellis, to whom it was given as a little nest-egg to try new fortunes in the mining-camps.

As for Cora and Jack, any one who can't guess what happened doesn't deserve to be told.

Joseph Cornwall, through the very respectful and polite Mr. Parsons, appealed to me to refund the money. The old miser couldn't sleep well, more on account of that money, I do believe, than because of his brother or the revelation that the governor of Utah made concerning Cornwall's' bribery, thievery, forging of records and general crookedness in stealing mining claims and getting them recorded. I listened quite respectfully to Mr. Parsons and referred him to Dr. Collins. It would take a crowbar and dynamite to get money intended for the Star of Hope hospital out of his pockets.

That Daniel Cornwall had tried to employ me as a gunman to dispose of Steve Ellis in New York was entirely in keeping with the way he had tried to settle his personal troubles in Utah. Not knowing how to get in touch with city crooks and find some of those people who will cut a throat for a dollar or shoot a man for five, he had thought to buy me for a few hundred, and probably wouldn't have paid the few hundred. More likely he would have helped the police get evidence to prove that I did it. Many people have got into trouble with me because I am not a crook in just the ways that they think, if, indeed, I am a crook at all.

It was highly probable that Daniel would have been acquitted of murder, for money is magic in criminal courts, and he was clever. Quiller, who showed more loyalty to Cornwall than the man deserved, told how they had with great difficulty—under pretense of being physicians—got hold of a suitable body from the morgue, dressed it in Daniel Cornwall's clothes and thrown it into the water. I say it is highly probable that Cornwall would have been acquitted, but he killed himself by jumping from the train while being take to Salt Lake for trial.

Joseph, the wily, clever, plausible legal member of the firm, had kept himself pretty well in the background of the Cornwall affairs. There was really no way of proving that he had meddled with even documents and records. The Federal Government took a hand, however, and snatched back some of the holdings that the Cornwalls had acquired. Joseph, though his miserly soul must have been dreadfully pained by the financial losses, never got into prison. He retired to some obscure place and was eventually forgotten.

I have a beautiful little steel box wherein to keep valuable papers—if I ever acquire any. I have a key too, and the key has a little gold case with a rather large diamond in it. The case is a miniature copy of the steel box and has a little inscription showing that it was presented to me by the governor of Utah, though the governor spoke to me a little reproachfully for not letting him know five years earlier that I had done him such a service.

I did not say so, but I had done him a greater service. I had let his own conscience finally rouse itself to defy the men whom he thought could ruin him, though in the wash-bowl of that cheap little Salt Lake rooming-house I had burned the evidence that they thought they had.

A LETTER from one of use who has no trouble in finding adventure:

Springfield, Mo.

Camp-Fire is like an old pal, but I do not think Camp-Fire is all to the good on the James boys. Have been talking to a man here that knew Cole Younger very well here and in Platte, Nebr., and had worked nights for a week at a time in the same room with them all making them saddles, etc. Will write all I get on them at another time.

When it comes to adventure, say, I step into every new city and street with a feeling of adventure, to stop where the road leaves me, to see strange sights, strange people. It is life—all adventure, every day. A mile or so southeast of here I can find all that Stanley found in Africa; a mile south I can be a guerrilla raider or a member of the K. K. Klan; a mile north I can be Peary at the Pole. It's all adventure if you look at it right.—M. CHARLES CHAMBERLAIN.

WHEN he first sent us the story that appears in this issue and is marked as one of our "Off the Trail" stories, Mr. Hurst was for having it published without any word to indicate whether or not it was to be taken seriously. Finally I persuaded him to let me give you his letter concerning the subject-matter of the story. Personally I do not smile at any seeming improbability in the main idea. I've learned it doesn't pay to smile very broadly at a thing merely because it *seems* improbable. Lots of things, like airships, the World War and the wireless, have come to pass after wiseacres had laughed themselves sick over the idea that there could ever be any such improbable thing. I don't say that the amazing catastrophe described in this story is going to come to pass, but I most certainly don't say it isn't.

Most of us know very little about that subject; a few have made it a real study, but it is entirely possible that the natives of India may have gone much further into the problem than our Western students have yet been able to follow. And if we don't know all about a thing we're taking a big risk in saying that it can or can not accomplish certain things

Fearing that Christian Scientists might object to an underestimate of the effects of their teachings, I submitted the story to Scientists who are well able to give authoritative opinion and found them quite willing to pass over this point because of what may be called the net truth of the tale.

In any case, it seems to us in the office an interesting story quite aside from these points.

Here is an extract from Mr. Hurst's letter:

Seattle, Wash.

This story "The Limit of Conquest," while not a story of war, is just *as true a warning*, although you will consider my fears fantastic. Wells, and many others, including the late Kaiser, have written upon the final war, in which the East vanquishes our civilization. But none of them got the *straight tip* that I got.

SOME time ago, I met a high caste native of India, one of those who come to America and make a good thing out of pandering to the craving of silly women, with some fancy religion. We had long talks. He claimed to be Prince something, but his title does not matter. I was astonished at his grasp of every subject we discussed. Among other things, I asked him why the Indian rope trick was no longer performed. It used to be common enough. You know the thing; a fakir unwinds a rope from around his waist, throws it up in the air, where it stands straight up like a pole; then a boy climbs the rope, and disappears or not, as the case may be. I asked this because when the present King of England was in India a large sum of money was offered to any fakir who would do the trick. I forget the amount, but it was far more than a fakir could earn in a dozen lifetimes. Yet not a one came forward. Why? My prince chap smiled at the question. "But it was only an instance of group hypnosis, which your psychologists deny the possibility of, wasn't it?" he asked.

"Yes—but why wasn't it done for the King? Was the crowd too large?"

"The crowd number would have been arranged to suit the fakir—if it is possible to have too large a crowd. No, that was not the reason we decided to stop it."

"Who do you mean by 'we'?"

He grinned that peculiar, irritating grin of the native, "I can not tell you—only we did not wish your psychologists to become believers in group psychology. A few, I believe, do admit its possibilities, but they are rare."

That was the gist of our talk, and the native

seemed sorry he had said so much. You will learn why from my story.

I HAVE made it look as practical as possible, but it was a job. Of course I was helped by believing what I wrote about—which you won't. We should prepare for this danger, just as we should have gotten ready for the war with Germany. I know I will be called a crazy fool for the warning, or else what I write will be taken for mere fiction. But if—I could bring home the danger—the danger which lies in the East, in which men will not believe until too late. An unseen weapon, the very existence of which is denied by our scientists, is pointed in our direction. Now, read the tale, and call me an imaginative fool, who has allowed a story to get the best of his common sense. Because, at any rate, we will not live to see the final war—at least, I don't think we will.—S. B. HURST.

IF IT were any of the other magazines I worked on before *Adventure* was born I'd not like to ask the readers just voluntarily to help push the magazine. It would seem a bad case of nerve. But I haven't a bit of reluctance in asking Camp-Fire to do just that for *Adventure*. In fact, I'm sorry I didn't think to do it sooner.

I don't mean I'm going to ask anybody to get subscriptions or anything like that. And I don't mean that *Adventure's* circulation is going down and we need help to make it pay. It's not going down. It's going up. And it's paying. But naturally we want it to go up still faster and still higher. We want it to pay all it legitimately can and I make no bones about presenting this matter on that basis. I'm asking a pure favor, not trying to jolly you into something by painting it up to look like something it isn't. It happens that you would gain in a minor way by doing what I ask, but not enough to warrant my putting the matter up to you on that basis at all. I'm asking you to do it because it will increase the magazine's sales and make it pay better.

IT'S just this. Every little while some of you write in quite voluntarily and tell us *Adventure* isn't being carried for sale in such and such a place or that there are not enough copies to supply the demand. Sometimes it is a plain kick—the writer of the letter is sore because he couldn't get the magazine when he wanted it. Sometimes it is merely mentioned incidentally. Sometimes as a favor and kindness to us—and very often the writer says something like "though maybe you aren't interested in such matters" or half-apologizes for speaking of it.

Believe me, we here in the office *are* interested. That's exactly the favor I want to ask of all of you who can spare the time and are willing to take the trouble. *Adventure* sells well when it is put where people can buy it, but that isn't so easy to do as it seems. I used to think it was a simple matter, but I had that idea knocked out of me. The proper distributing of a magazine is a difficult and very complicated business. The newsdealer, the news company and the publisher all stand to gain by the best distribution that can be attained and all work together to attain it, but even that cooperation can't ensure it.

WE WANT *Adventure* on every newsstand where there is a demand for it—in the United States, Canada, Australia and everywhere that there are readers of the English language. We don't want to burden any newsdealer uselessly. Though as *Adventure* is "fully returnable" he doesn't lose if any copies remain unsold. But we do want to be sure that every newsdealer has enough copies so that no one will be unable to get an *Adventure* when he wants it.

That is where you come in, if you will. A newsdealer nearly always knows his own business, but, like all the rest of us, sometimes he doesn't seize on every opportunity to make supply fit demand. Also it is by no means always his fault if he hasn't a magazine when it's called for; the publisher may be responsible, as in the case of the recent strike, or the big machinery of the news company may have slipped a small cog somewhere, or, most likely of all, transportation may not have been what it should. Or he may be sold out on some particular issue of a magazine even though he had ordered the number indicated by previous sales.

We're not trying to hang anything on the newsdealer. It's our business to make satisfactory adjustment with him. But first we must know whether any adjustment is needed. And you are the ones who can tell us. We have our own men in the field but there are a good many newsstands in the world, conditions are changing at each one of them and even ten times as many men couldn't keep track of all the details.

WILL you, then, let us know whenever you have difficulty in getting your copy of *Adventure*? Get the dealer's side of it first and give us the main points of the situation. Your own judgment will indicate the important points and don't forget to be specific so we can locate the dealer by name or exact location or address. *Adventure* appears on the 3rd and 18th of every month; of course the supply will be lower, perhaps exhausted, by the 2nd or 17th, so it is important that you should give us the date of your visit to the newsstand.

And will you let us know if you find a district anywhere in which *Adventure* is not on sale? If you know any one who would carry it, that will help all the more. In short, if you will give us any tips that occur to you on how to perfect our distribution of the magazine we'll be very grateful to you indeed and these tips will certainly get the fullest and most careful consideration. We can hardly ask you to write specially for this purpose, though it will be appreciated if you do, but thousands of you are writing in on other accounts and you could tack on a paragraph or two on this subject. Write it to me personally or to any of us or just to the magazine, but time in handling will be saved if you write direct to J. J. Crowley, Director of Newsstand Sales.

THAT'S the favor I want to ask—your friendly cooperation in getting *Adventure* to wherever there is a demand for it. And if it isn't convenient to grant the favor, we'll be just as good friends as we were before. As I said at the beginning, I'd not like to ask this favor if it were a case of any other magazine, but *Adventure's* readers have proved their real friendship for "our magazine." I know I have a friend's right to ask a favor, and you know you have a friend's right to grant it or not, as you see fit, knowing it will be all right either way.

AN extremely interesting reply to Edgar Young's call for information on "King John." Surely a call at our Camp-Fire goes out over all the world and in some nook or cranny, near or distant, is very likely to find at least one man who can answer. And I've an idea there will be some more responses before we're through.

Lindsay, California.

In answer to an inquiry in the October *Adventure* with regard to King John:

The man who is once and again heard of under that name was at one time bosun's mate upon the Liverpool four-mast barque *Silberhorn*. The *Silberhorn* was abandoned at sea some fourteen years or so ago, on fire. She was sighted by an Iquique bound ship some eighty miles southwest of Robinson Crusoe Island; and a search later carried out for her ship's company was fruitless. The fate of the old *Silberhorn* has nothing to do with King John, however.

THIS man's real name was Reuben Sweeny; and he was an immense Liverpool Irishman. There was certainly no Spanish blood in him at all. He was very fair and had remarkably deep blue eyes.

He was a foremast hand on the *Pyrrhenes*, a full rigger that took fire at sea when bound from 'Frisco for a European port. They ran her to Pitcairn Island and on arriving there found that the sea was too high for them to be able to beach her and so, with the ship a smoldering mass beneath hatches and with her decks on the point of breaking out at any moment, they decided to make for Manga Reeva Island, some three hundred miles or so away. The only way that they were able to procure provisions at all was by passing a line under one or other of the men and lowering him into the lazaret, where he groped for whatever he could lay his hands upon in the darkness and smoke. The men who made the dive into the lazaret were as often as not hauled back to deck unconscious from the smoke.

One man who seemed to be quite unaffected by the heat and smoke was Reuben Sweeny, and the mate, as he returned to the deck on one occasion, said to him, "Sweeny, if you weren't Irish you'd ought to have been king of all the niggers."

Sweeny, who was black as any negro and nearly naked, replied with an oath: "By —— mister, it's quittin' the sea that I'm thinkin' of and maybe it's a nigger emperor I'll be."

THE *Pyrrhenes* was at length beached at Manga Reeva, where the crew found the natives almost starving and where there was no food for them. Fortunately in a few days a small schooner took them off. When they lay upon her decks at night there was barely room for a man to put his foot down. They sailed thus for a few days and then had the good fortune to fall in with a steamer bound from the Colonies to 'Frisco and were taken aboard her. If I remember aright it was the *Sierra*—either her or the *Sonoma* or *Ventura* of the same line.

They arrived in 'Frisco just a day or two before the *Silberhorn* sailed from there, bound around the Horn for Falmouth for orders. And a number of the crew of the *Pyrrhenes* shipped with her, among them being Reuben Sweeny.

THIS man had two cronies named Tom Swift and Bloody Quayle. The three of them used to be well known from one end of the world to the other in all the joints along the waterfront. They were all Liverpool Irish and a fighting, cursing, hell-raising trio.

I made a passage at one time with Tom Swift and Sweeny and Quayle from the Columbia to Antwerp. With them in the lead, the crew mutinied at sea, and we had for a while quite a cheery time of it.

Some years after, I was down Fenchurch Street on my way to look for a ship and ran into Tom and Bloody. I asked them where Sweeny was and Tom replied:

"Billy, by ——, that old stiff's gone an' made himself king o' the blighted niggers."

It seemed that the three of them had been upon a packet named the *Blytheswood* that was hove down and lost all her sticks off Valparaiso. She made Valparaiso under jury rig; and there the three of them skipped and went ashore. There is no question that Sweeny is the man in the rôle of "King John." I was a close friend of the second mate of the *Pyrrhenes* and well acquainted with the *Silberhorn*, having made several voyages with her and having corresponded for a number of years with several English sea apprentices who served their time on her. The mate of the *Blytheswood* when she was dismasted and taken into Vallapo for repair was a man named Abel Pengelly and hailed from Bude Haven. I knew him well.

THE three sailors shipped out of Vallapo with a steamer going up the coast, and Reuben Sweeny left her at Callao and thence went inland upon a cruise of care-free devilment. He spoke both French and Spanish fluently, was afraid of absolutely nothing and was, to boot, as strong as a grown bull. He was a splendid singer and carried with him on all his ships an old fiddle.

Swift and Quayle were on the point of cleaning up on me for laughing at them when they told me that he was king of the blacks.

They insisted that they were not kidding at all and so I got busy and looked up by letter my various old shipmates who were in a position to corroborate to any extent their statements.

Both Swift and Quayle saw Sweeny a couple of years after he left them in Callao at the same port and there he tried to persuade them to go up country with him. He told them that he was actually "King o' the damdest gang o' niggers you ever saw" and that he had them where they obeyed every word he spoke on the running jump. He did his utmost to pursuade his old shipmates to go with him. But Tom Swift was at the time much enamored of a woman who lived on Cordova Street, Vancouver, and was heading at the time north to see her and absolutely refused to go. Bloody Quayle was too quarrelsome a man to get along with Sweeny unless Tom Swift were there and so decided to stay with Tom.

IT is now a number of years since I heard of King John. It is, moreover, possible that the "King John" in question may be a descendant of the original, or rather a successor, or possibly a different man entirely and ruling in a different part of the world.

Reuben Sweeny acquired the name of John during a rumpus in some West Coast port where a Dago addressed him as John—meaning that he was a Johnny Bull.

He was rather fat for a deep-water sailor and very square and wide-shouldered. His legs were decidedly bowed, and perhaps as noticeable a feature as any about him was his nose, which was unusually large and not unlike the cartoons that one sees of Ferdinand of Bulgaria.

If you run across him give him my compliments.

How to get to his kingdom I have no idea. He is a man who can go where most other men would be quite unable to follow. And I think that any one trying to find him might have a gay time in doing so.—B. M. ADAMS.

A LINE from W. C. Tuttle of our writers' brigade concerning something that happened when he was hunting partridge:

Spokane, Washington.

Funny thing happened. Jackrabbit hopped out of the stubble, and one of the boys took a shot at it—too far to do much damage. Anyway, the rabbit hopped through a barb-wire fence, caught on one of the prongs, and just about disemboweled itself. One of the bunch started after it, and away went Mr. Jack, across plowed ground, running like ——. In all it must have traveled a mile—without any insides to speak about, and finally crawled into an old coyote den, where we found it, still alive, but with its works all gone. Can you beat that? Any old time that anybody tells you that a rabbit hasn't any guts, you can tell 'em that it don't make any difference—they don't need 'em.—TUT.

SOMETHING more about Doc Middleton, who has already come up at our Camp-Fire, from one of us who knew him personally:

Omaha, Nebraska.

In November *Adventure* I read a sketch By E. E. Harriman regarding a bygone attempt to capture Doc Middleton; and having known Middleton in his later years, I thought it might interest readers to hear something about his death.

TO ME Doc Middleton's noble, rugged features and straight six-foot of sinewy manhood characterized the fast disappearing frontiersman more strikingly than any of the old-timers I ever saw—and I have seen a few.

In the West men are still largely judged by what they are today, and not what they were in the past. What deeds and transgressions Middleton committed during his notorious career as a frontiersman, gambler, outlaw and convict, they were cast into oblivion when the law released its grip upon him and sent him forth once more a free man.

Middleton returned to the Black Hills country, where the good and bad of him was known, and began life as a rancher. In this field he not only won success but, in time, even the honor and respect of his fellow citizens.

Middleton loved horses. He was much interested in racing events. Even in his advanced years he took part in a long-distance race from Chadron, Neb., to Chicago. He did not win.

Middleton also ventured into a saloon business at Ardmore, So. Dak., which eventually proved his undoing. A few years ago he was arrested for some infraction of the liquor law and lodged in jail at Douglas, Wyo. This proved too much for nature. The accumulated injury of a strenuous life wrecked his health, he contracted pneumonia and died in jail, a broken, lonely old man.—J. FRANCIS KOLLER.

THIS comrade is strong for our Camp-Fire buttons, "the open sesame of good fellowship," etc.

Brooklyn, New York.

On the road on my last trip I often wished I had a means of knowing who was who. The only way I had was to meet a fellow and find out through a talk if he was a brother-reader of the magazine and "Camp-Fire" or not. I have met many who belonged and have spent many pleasant hours that otherwise would have been dull. I think the Camp-Fire insignia is a great idea.

AM KNOWN as number 10559 on my metal card, and I have had it read in every language engraved on it. I have covered twenty-eight States not merely across, but up and down and over. I am supposed to be a sign-painter and letterer, and up to date I have got by splendidly. I have had all the ups and downs of the road from A to Izzard, but have never had any adventure worth while to send in for you all to read—at least nothing out of the ordinary.

I will sure be proud to wear a Camp-Fire button, and believe me it will mean *some* to me. I leave New York for the open road next week, *pronto*. I may walk or ride—who knows? The blind if I am broke, the cushions if I am flush.—WILLIAM MAHER.

THE following letter was received by W. A. Sternberg of Tacoma, Washington, and passed on by him to Camp-Fire:

Holbrook, Arizona.

I read your letter in the "Camp-Fire" about Calamity Jane. My husband, when he was in the Indian War and served U.S.A. for nine years and eight months in the 2nd and 3rd Cavalry as sergeant knew her. She was married to her man as she called him. He and she both were (?) of Dutch Henry's. She got up the sights for the band.

MY husband hid her for three days away from the sheriff that had trailed her. He told me that she came to his camp, he being out with some 20 men to trail some Indians, and asked him to protect her. She told him she would reform. Said he to me: "She was a woman, led away and ruined by men. My mother was a woman. I could not refuse." Therefore he hid her for three days, until the sheriff was really gone. Then he gave her a compass and provisions and started her off upon her journey, which was to Deadwood. She had a very fine riding horse. His men did not see her. She told him if ever he needed a friend to write her.

She died after I came to Arizona. My husband was in Texas at that time—I do not remember the place. She was never a real scout. Had a bogus passport, which she lost. I can not write you all. It would take too long. He also gave her some ammunition. Her face was hard from the life she led, but once, when he returned unexpectedly, he found her crying; her face had a different look, then the defiant look returned, which she maintained. Memory bells were chiming, I suppose.

I have written this under a lot of outside noise. Children crying, etc., so please excuse mistakes.—(MRS.) HELEN LAWRENCE THYSING.

DO YOUR share toward adding to the list of Camp-Fire stations all over this country and Canada and, gradually, all over the world. Here's the general idea for stations, subject, always, to changes, if desired.

A station may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a station shall display the regular station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and provide and preserve a sufficiently substantial register book. When there are enough stations to warrant even a small wholesale order this office will furnish the books and signs.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause for complaint from members, a station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A STATION bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to condition of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above station privileges. (Question of requiring identification-cards or Camp-Fire button to be decided later.) Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

A station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members is excellent.

LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

MY BLUNDER. In a former issue of this department I stated that a motorman is paid sixty cents an hour, a college president only eighteen. I took that data from New York newspaper reports of a speech by President Hadley of Yale. Since it was practically the basis or key to the whole speech, which advocated higher pay for educators, it seemed beyond the bounds of reason that this statement had not been made by President Hadley. And if it were made by him in a public speech it would be accepted unquestioningly.

I kept one of the clippings on my desk for a month or so to be sure of my data when needed. Having written my little article, I threw away the clipping. After it was printed some one in the office challenged the comparison. I started to reason it out for myself and found the eighteen too low to be possible on any but one basis. The sixty could stand.

The one basis upon which the eighteen is sound is that of reckoning a college president's whole time, or much of his time, from his entering upon self-supporting work, counting such work, whatever its nature, as part of the necessary preparation for his eventually becoming a college president.

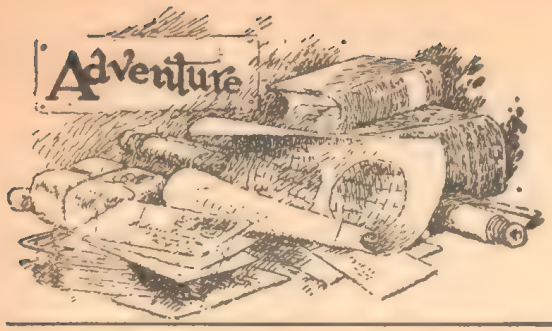
My blunder, and I offer my sincere apologies. *But* it does not spoil my argument. It was used as an illustration. There are plenty of other illustrations that could have been used. The main fact stands. Educators and other highly trained brains are paid far less than are many who perform manual labor needing little or no preparatory training or mental equipment. And that condition of affairs spells ruin to the civilization that clings to it.

Stop immigration. Stop immigration until we can assimilate and Americanize the millions and millions we already have in the United States. Their presence and the fact that they are not Americanized are Capital's crime, though all of us are guilty because of our indifference. That so many immigrants, not only un-Americanized but unnaturalized and not citizens of our country, are permitted to play so large a part in our economic and social problems and unrest are Labor's fault.

Only fools or knaves will let the flood of immigration continue to pour in on us. To do so is to commit suicide as Americans and as a democracy. The platitude about being a refuge to all oppressed peoples, an open door to liberty and opportunity, is bosh. If this flood keeps on pouring in there will be here neither refuge nor liberty nor opportunity. Only a chaos of strife, greed and stupidity. They may be as good as we, or better or worse. The point is that under such a deluge of various and conflicting races, creeds, economic and social beliefs, training and outlook, all so far beyond our ability to assimilate, there can be no cohesion, no common life, no unity of purpose, no permanence of institutions.

We can best serve the other peoples of the world by seeing to it that in this country are preserved things that will be really worth their having when we become able to make them a part of what we have, instead of ruining what we have by unlimited adulteration.

And to ensure what we have and develop it into what it should be we must turn our organized effort directly to the task, not only of Americanizing the foreign element we already have, but of Americanizing *ourselves*, of learning and teaching and practising the real democracy we think we have and haven't, of realizing the obligation and responsibility of ordinary every-day citizenship in a democracy. —A. S. H.



VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one.* They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 *Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that:*

WILL BUY: 1919 issues. Have some *Adventures* and a dozen other magazines to exchange for them.—Address C. B. DARROW, 232 Highland Ave., Buffalo, N. Y.

WILL BUY: Complete file of *Adventure* if in good condition.—Address LEONARD W. BARKLEY, Morrisburg, Ontario, Canada.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of this issue.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1833 S St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
BERIAH BROWN, Seattle Press Club, 1309 Fifth Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, freshwater pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, 6 W. Concord Ave., Orlando, Florida. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially* early history of Missouri valley.

8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac B'ld'g., Chicago, Ill. Covering Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber sections.

9. Middle Western U. S. Part 3
LARRY ST. JOHN, 714 Crilly B'ld'g., Chicago, Ill. Covering Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Lake Michigan. Fishing, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, clamming, early history, legends.

10. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

11. Western U. S. Part 2 and Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. B. WHITEAKER, Cedar Park, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs; topography, climate, natives, hunting, history, industries.

12. Mexico Part 2 Southern
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering that part of Mexico lying south of a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, commerce.

★(*Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

Return postage not required from U. S. or Canadian soldiers, sailors or marines in service outside the U. S., its possessions, or Canada.

13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 1
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 2
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., covering south-eastern Ontario and the lower Ottawa Valley. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping.

15. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering Southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

16. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

17. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

18. North American Snow Countries Part 6
H. S. BELCHER, The Hudson's Bay Company, Ft. Alexander, Manitoba, Canada. Covering Manitoba, Saskatchewan, MacKenzie and Northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel.

19. North American Snow Countries Part 7
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Richmond, Quebec. Covering New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper and wood-pulp industries, land grants, water-power.

20. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 632 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

21. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

22. South America Part 1
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

23. South America Part 2
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Covering Venezuela, The Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

24. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

25. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, N. M. Covering history, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, exports and imports; manufacturing.

26. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Maine. Covering Japan: Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

27. Russia and Eastern Siberia
MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Austin, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalien; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

28. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Carmel, Monterey Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

29. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

30. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

31. ★ Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N.W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, 7 Place de Tertre, Paris, XVIII, France. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

32. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

33. ★ Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Hotel Sydney, Sydney, Australia. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

FIREARMS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shotguns (including foreign and American makes). J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers (including foreign and American makes). D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering fishingtackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; live bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen. Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash. D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

FOR ARMY, NAVY OR MARINE CORPS

Accurate, free information. What the Government is doing for discharged soldiers and sailors. Facts not opinions given. No questions answered involving criticism or bestowing praise or blame. Enclose stamped addressed envelope. Only *specific* questions answered. Address—SERVICE, THE HOME SECTOR, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City, New York.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

The following "Ask Adventure" editors are now serving in our military forces. We hope you will be patient if their answers are at times delayed: Capt.-Adj. Joseph Mills Hanson; Major A. M. Lochwitzky.

How to Make an Overall Pack

WHEN a man foots it out over far, unsettled country, he must pack his home on his back. Here is the way a pack is made by a Typical Tropical Tramp, or an Alaskan sourdough:

Question:—"I read in *Adventure* a mention about using overalls for packing.

Will you kindly tell me in some detail just how the overall pack is made, how much it will carry, how to sling it on to the back, etc.?"—CARL BLOOMQUIST, Bow, Wash.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—Overalls or trousers are used for packing in the following fashion:

We will assume, for instance, that you are going to carry the regulation load which would include a change of clothing and sundry other things needed by a man on the trail, or anything that would roll—including blanket—into a pack about the size of a man's body. Here is how you proceed to make up your pack:

Distribute your load in one end of blanket (after same has been spread on the ground) so that it will form a pile about eighteen inches to two feet long. The blanket should be a single army, or other good blanket. Then bring the sides over until they meet and lap, making a flat tube just as wide as your pile of belongings. If your blanket is a very wide one you will have to double it before beginning. Then start rolling, using your load you intend to pack as a core, until you have rolled up the full length of the blanket. This should make a roll about the size of your body, with your belongings sealed within by the manner in which it was rolled.

Then start roping. Start with a running noose and pull up as tight as you can on one end of the roll, then pass to the other end and rope that end. Then take the rope around endwise, knotting it as you cross the other ropes. It's just like roping a trunk, or tying up a package. The rope is around both ends and then goes around endwise.

Now you have a compact bundle about as large as a man's body from his neck to his hips, and it is complete in itself. Take your pair of overalls and unbutton them and shove your bundle down into them just as if you were putting a pair of pants on the bundle. Button them up and belt them on the bundle as tightly as possible.

Now you have the legs of your overalls lying there empty. Take hold of one and without allowing it to twist bring the end up and tie it to the rope that passes around the opposite end of bundle by passing around the rope and wrapping the end of the overall leg that you passed around the rope to the overall leg. Bring up the other end of the other overall leg and tie it beside this one. Now, if you have followed me, you have your pack ready to put on. You want to slip it on as if you were putting on a vest. The seat of your packing overalls wants to be up in the air.

It should set just right on your back if you have made your roll as I have said, but if not you can adjust by loosening the belt around the pack and getting it to just the right spot where it will sit right on you.

You see the advantage this gives for packing is that you have the broad legs of the overalls across your shoulders, instead of trying to cut your shoulders to pieces with ropes. I had saddle sores on my back and shoulders from packing with ropes down through Mexico; and right on the frontier I met up with an old Alaskan "sourdough" who showed men how to roll a pack. I have never packed any other way, and I have taught several pals who left off the way they had been packing and adopted this way.

You can sling your pack high or low on your back by taking up or letting out on the ends of your overall legs. You will soon find out just the right length.

Samoa

A NEW era has dawned for that group of innumerable islands of which American Samoa is one of the most ideal. Ever westward sets the tide of emigration. And many a ship, laden with trade goods and traders, harrows and planters, steams out through the Golden Gate toward the new land of promise: .

Question—:"Kindly furnish me information regarding the Samoan Islands covering particularly the following questions:

1. Extreme range of climate.
2. Annual average rainfall.
3. Duration of rainy season.
4. Present ownership of the Islands since the war.
5. Name and population of largest town on the Islands.
6. Does the tropical ailment known as Amoebic Dysentery exist?
7. Would it be possible or feasible for an American to acquire land there and operate a plantation for the purpose of raising cocoanuts, etc.?
8. Is there at present a good market for copra?
9. I have understood that white settlers were not desired in the Islands and that passengers disembarking had to put up a cash bond with the local authorities as a guarantee of good faith that they would not remain permanently. Is this true?
10. In case plantation land could be acquired how should one proceed with the negotiations and what is the average price of good sandy beach land per acre?
11. What is the total white population at present?
12. How often do boats call at the port?
13. What, if any small game exists on the Islands?
14. Do the port stores carry the usual plantation supplies and shotgun ammunition?
15. What would you think of the chances of success of a man accustomed to roughing it in the tropics who had several thousand dollars and wished to go into the plantation business there, particularly with a view to cocoanut raising?
16. Do you know of any of the South Sea Islands where you think that his chances would be better?"—F. D. N. HARRISON, Ark.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:—

1. The thermometer seldom goes higher than 82 degrees or lower than 72 degrees F.
2. No rainfall data available. If this is essential,

I would advise you to write to Washington, to the office in charge of American Samoa, which should also supply you with more details than I can give up to date.

3. There is an annual hurricane season, which extends from December to April, and the rainy season is January, February, March.

4. The Samoan Group was divided between Germany, Britain, and U. S. On the declaration of war (1914) an expeditionary force from New Zealand seized German Samoa, and the New Zealanders remained in possession. At the Peace Conference in Paris, New Zealand was given the mandatory over the whole of the Samoan Islands, excepting, of course, those held by U. S.

5. Apia, on the middle island (Upolu) is the capital of the group, the home of most of the white people of the group. Have not the detailed census of Apia, but the total population of the group is only 648 British, 236 Americans, 240 other nationalities, 500 Germans, and about 35,000 Samoans.

6. Bacillary dysentery is fairly common here, as in other parts of the South Sea Islands. But the Health Department under New Zealand's direction is coping with this and other tropical diseases. To the credit of the Naval supervision of American Samoa be it recorded that many of the serious diseases are unknown in the U. S. group, and tropical dysentery is on that list.

7. The land in all the Samoan Group is communistic—that is, it is held by the natives. When U. S. took possession of its portion of Samoa, it had to purchase through the Court the land upon which its buildings now stand, and I think there is only one American planter there, and his holding is leasehold. In their portion, of course, the Germans helped themselves to land. The British respected the native custom. Under the New Zealand mandatory you will be able to obtain a lease, and I do not think that you will be barred because you are an American. Your wisest course would be to cruise around and pick upon one of the numerous (nay, myriad) islands of the South Seas and work it on your own by lease from the local authority. Go out and look over the ground (or seas) for yourself, after consulting Washington for all the advice or information you can get.

8 Latest reports state that there has been an improvement in the copra market, which the war naturally had set back seriously. It was then quoted at one hundred and twenty-five dollars per ton f. o. b. in the Islands and at three hundred dollars in London (England). London reports future prospects of the brightest, and as Americans are now competing for copra in the Sydney (Australia) market, the English tip is verified. Sydney is the central port for South Sea trade. In American Samoa copra (the dried kernel of the coconut) is practically the staple product, and it is specially well dried for the U. S. oil producers to use in making the best quality soap.

9. This is the first time I have heard of such a stipulation. In these latter days the natives look more upon the white man as a tourist than as a fixture. Of course, some of the Islanders have had sad and bad experience with beach-combers and other undesirables.

10. Why good sandy beach land in particular? Not thinking of river silt, are you? It is all luxuriantly growing land that is obtainable in the Islands. I can't give you even an idea of land values today. That is another question Washington may answer for you.

11. The New Zealanders in occupation took a census of British and German Samoa in 1917, and these are the figures:

Nationality	Males	Females	Total
British	345	303	648
American	132	104	236
Swedes	25	17	42
Other Nationalities	103	97	200
German	284	246	530
Samoan Islanders	19,199	16,205	35,404
Other Polynesians	310	121	431
Totals	20,398	17,093	37,491

12. Owing to the war and the consequent shortage of shipping, regular trading has been completely disorganized, and has not yet been arranged according to time table. Even connection with New Zealand is irregular. Trading schooners from Australian ports are doing most of the business just now.

13. Wild pigs are abundant, also pigeons, doves, ducks, plover, herons, rails.

14. Yes you can get all the supplies of a modern store.

15. I should say that capital, common sense, concentration, and wisely chosen location will spell success with a happier condition of living in the Samoan Group than in, say, Europe, Asia, Africa, or America. U. S. is especially creating a market for the best prepared copra.

16. My advice is that you should cruise around the Islands and pick out an island for yourself. Companies are doing this—why not individuals?

You must not settle anywhere on my say-so, not on any other man's. See for yourself—not the once-over, but a close investigation. Work on a plantation before getting one of your own. Let the experienced planter break you in.

And finally neither is the large scale map available over here. As I said in the beginning, say now, and repeat again—get into touch with the American Samoan Department in Washington and check its data up with what I am able to give you from this end. Then go ahead, and the best of good luck (Kia Ora) be with you.

I find that the average annual rainfall taken by the American Naval authorities at Pago Pago for the past twelve years has been 179 inches. December to February are the hottest months and June to August the coolest.

Rifles of the Old Frontier

A MAN who could knock a squirrel from a limb at 200 yards had to be "some" shot with the old muzzle-loading rifle. Mr. Wiggins discusses this early arm and its European origin:

Question:—"A discussion has arisen as to whether Daniel Boone, Sam Wetzel, Natty Bumppo and other renowned Indian killers of history and fiction used smooth-bores or rifles. I have always held the opinion that, while the smooth-bore was the general weapon, a few gunsmiths produced rifled barrels which the experts used.

"Barking" squirrels and other accurate shooting

at 200 yards seems impossible with a smooth-bore.

Will you settle this dispute for us and also refer us to books on ancient fire-arms?

The main argument against the possibility of a muzzle-loading rifle was that a bullet sufficiently large to grip the lands could not be forced home with a ram-rod."—P. C. CARLETON, U. S. Marines, Quantico, Va.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—Yes, the noted Indian fighters of the old frontier did use rifled arms, and I never knew of the use of the smooth-bore to any extent after the introduction of the rifle, except by the regular troops, even the scouts enlisted for emergencies always retaining their own rifles.

I am fortunate in being well acquainted with a direct descendent of Kenton, and the Wetzels and Captain Sam Brady. He is a very fine shot with the muzzle loading rifle in my collection, being able to beat me any day, and, as he is over eighty and I am thirty-two, you can see he is a worthy son of the old-timers. He always speaks of the skill of the old rangers with their rifles, and has a great scorn for the smooth-bore gun.

Smooth-bores were used a good deal in the New England States, and I am under the impression that they were mostly the arms brought back from the French Wars by the colonists; certainly they were not capable of accuracy. But with buckshot they were bad medicine, as the Huns found our Winchester pump-stick to be in the late disturbance.

The very early explorers used smooth-bored arms, as the rifle was not popular enough to be well known till the beginning of the eighteenth century, if my authorities are correct. The terror of the "Fire-stick" was equally as deadly as the effect to the Indians, I believe.

As for the method of loading the muzzle-loading rifle: First the smoke was blown out the muzzle from the previous shot. Then the powder was measured from the horn, using a bear's tooth as a measure. I have seen this done recently. Other means may have been popular, however, as I have seen a good many powder horns with a measuring device incorporated in them. Then the bullet, considerably smaller than the bore, was wrapped in greased buckskin or linen, and forced down with the ram-rod. The greased patch made loading easy, as the ball slipped home with very little friction. Then the pan was opened, and a little priming powder was poured into it. The pancover was then let down on the priming, and the hammer cocked. After every few shots the flint was scraped to give a fresh striking surface, thus insuring a good spark.

Lewis Wetze learned to load his rifle at a run, thus mystifying the Indians, who said "Him gun always loaded; him devil." I can load the old arm I own at the rate of sixty or even fifty seconds per shot.

That the Pennsylvania gunsmiths evolved the American rifle from the clumsy Jaegers brought to the new country from the Palatine by the early Moravians, is the opinion held by most authorities. The Germans used a naked ball and carried a mallet to drive it home, as they did not have the brains to figure out the greased patch. Deckard, Lancaster, and Miller were famous in the early days as the best rifles.

I recommend the following books: "Fire-arms in American History," by Charles Winthrop Sawyer; and "The Gun Book," by Thos. Heron McKee. The latter is published by Holt & Co., of New York.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

HORNSTEIN, SAMUEL. Lived at 1745 Third Ave. Kindly send me your present address.—MARK AARONSON, Room 714, 512 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y.

ROZENTHAL, SAMUEL. Roumanian. Last seen in National Winter Garden, Houston St., and Second Ave. Kindly send me your address.—MARK AARONSON, Room 714, 512 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

SPALDING, JOSEPH WARREN. Brother. When last heard from was in Dallas, Texas. Write to your sister. She is now a widow and wants to hear from you.—Address MRS. NORA SUMMERS, 328 Hamilton Ave., Norfolk, Va.

JENNINGS, FLOYD. Ex-U. S. N. Write me.—Address S. J. RIPICH, 121 East 7th Street, New York, N. Y., or care of *Adventure.*

GREEVES, J. GARDNER. Brother-in-law. Last heard of at Camp Taylor, Ky., as Adjutant of the 84th Division. Any information will be appreciated.—Address L. C. WELCH, care of Judge-Advocate's Office, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

DANCH, MRS. MARY. Maiden name Mary Mahalie. Last heard of two years ago, residing at 71 West 18th St., Bayonne, N. J. Any information will be appreciated. Address ANDREW DANCH, care of Jas. J. McNally, 57 East Grand Ave., Chicago, Ill.

BENNETT, JOSEPH NICHOLAS WILLIAM. Last address, in 1914, was Camp 7, care of Mr. Bacon, U.S.S. Railroad Survey Party, Fairbanks, Alaska. Left Russia for America some years ago. Family lived with Russian imperial family for over thirty years. Father and mother not well and very anxious to hear from him. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

MORRISON, JOHN D. A Scotchman, about forty years of age. Last heard from in Fredericton, N. B., Jan., 1912. Many changes have taken place. Any information will be appreciated by his uncle.—Address JAMES DAVIDSON, Rose Hill, Butler Co., Kansas.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

SHELDON, WILLIS D. Sixty-five years old, six feet one inch tall, weight 185 pounds, snow-white hair, bald spot on top of head, no teeth in upper mouth, heavy voice, slightly stooped shoulders, member of the Masons and Odd Fellows of Canaan, Conn. Left Bridgeport December 12, 1916, and has not been heard from since. Formerly drove a laundry wagon in Pittsfield, Mass. Any information regarding his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address WILLIAM E. BURTON, Washington and Madison Aves., Bridgeport, Conn.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the First-February or Mid-February issues of Adventure. They can get the name of the inquirer from this magazine:

ADAMS, NEWBURN; Albert, Vivian; Ball, Charles Frederick; Barber, Miss Pearl; Berrigan, Edward or Chub; Campbell, Duncan; Chandler, Frank Charley; Chapman, Charles; Clark, Charley; Cohen, Jacob; Davis, Fredie; Davis, Jack; Dean, Clarence; Denning, Leslie G.; Denning, W. Charles Myson; D. I. K; Dixon, Robert L.; Dorks, Miss Barbara; Falusi, Joseph; Ferren, Harry F.; Fiedler or Bany, Edward; Henderson, John; Hugh; Kilgore, Y. J.; Kruger, Henry; Kyle, Wesley or Gordon; Lamie, James; LaPierre, James; Leeman, George W.; Man from Mare Island; McClarty, James; McClean, Geo. or Jas.; McGuire, Amos and Willis; Morse, Raymond; Moss, Corp. Bruce D.; Nulph, Stewart; Orman; Parker, John R.; Pentacoff, Sgt. Charles W.; Prescott, George; Ramey, Dewey; Reeser, Albert E.; Sage Ollie E.; Thom, Gustave; Vail, John M.; Wagner, Gus; Wolverton, Earl L.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Jack P. Robinson; Roy Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; Lieutenant Wm. S. Hilles; G. H. Bennett; Byron Chrisholm; A. B. Paradis; E. E. S. Atkins; James P. Goggins; G. E. Hungerford; A. Gaylord; E. J. Moran; F. S. Emerson; E. Murphy; H. E. Copp.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity:

ALLISON, CORP. JAMES T.; Beaton, G. M.; Benson, Edwin Worth; Bryson, Clarence F.; Mr. Brownell; Carpenter, Capt. Robert S.; Carr, Fred; Coles, Bobby; Cook, William N.; Cosby, Arthur F.; Engleby, B.; Garson, Ed.; Hale, Robert E.; Harris, Walter J.; Hart, Jack; Hines, Joseph; Koltzau, John; Kuckaby, William Francis; Kuhn, Edward; Kutcher, Harry; Lafler, Mrs. Harry; Lancaster, C. E.; Larisey, Jack; Lee, Dr. C.; Lee, Capt. Harry; Lee, Dr. William R.; "Lonely Jock"; Lovett, Harold S.; McAdams, W. B.; MacDonald, Tony; MacNamee, Alva I.; Madsen, Sgt. E. E.; Hunt, Daniel O'Connell; Parrott, D. C.; Raymond, C. E.; Rich, Rob; Rundle, Merrill G.; Scott, James F.; Swan, George F.; Taylor, Jim; Thomas, C. L.; Tripp, Edward; Van Tyler, Chester; Von Gelucke, Byron; Wetherell, Corp. D. E.; Williams, Raymond J.; Williams, W. P.; Wood, Basil D.; S 177284; 439; L. T. 348; J. C. H.; W. S.-X. V.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address E. F. BRACE, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

MID-MARCH ISSUE

Two of the eleven stories to appear in our next number are listed on page two of this issue. Here are the rest:

MIXING IN — ***By Roy P. Churchill***

Had the steamship *Nimis* not been washed up high and dry beside the Spanish-American city of El Encanto, then *John Marriott* would not have been sent down to dig her out. In that case this particular revolution would not have been plotted in the way it was, and both *Phineas Tucker* and *Vincente Ordaz* would have less in life to regret.

THE TEST OF THE FIVE ARROWS — ***By Robert J. Pearsall***

It is written that he who survives the Test of the Five Arrows shall become the king of the Lolos, the inhabitants of China's Forbidden Land. The prophecy brings about still another clash between *Koshinga*, head of the secret order of the Ko Lao Hui, and *Hazard*, who is bent upon foiling *Koshinga's* dream of world empire.

HEART OF THE YANKEE — ***By Barry Scobee***

"You Yankees are chicken-hearted," maintains the Mexican gentleman, *Losoya*. And for example he tells this story of *Nathan North*, the Texas ranchman who risked his life to get the drop on a land thief—and then couldn't shoot.

THE WEAKNESS OF MEN — ***By Clyde B. Hough***

It is at Midway, that lonely relay cable-station between 'Frisco and Honolulu, that "the weakness of men" lays its hold on *Sergeant Dahl*, U. S. A. And before the sergeant becomes his own man again, there are some strange developments in that little Army post.

THE PIRATE AND THE COLONEL — ***By J. Allan Dunn***

"My sword is sharp enough to shave you," *Colonel Rhett* grimly informs the famous pirate, *Blackbeard*. And in avenging the outraged colonists of Carolina Province *Colonel Rhett* does more than prove his statement.

QUEEN OF THE HILLS — ***By Robert J. Horton***

"Lead ore going up, shafts are going down. Soon there'll be money enough to go all aroun'," sings *Sandy*, riding the Montana hills on his way to take advantage of the rising silver prices by relocating some forgotten claims that had been abandoned during the last slump. *Sandy* changes both his plans and his song, however, when he enters the former boom town and remembers the phonograph that used to play "The Prairie Rose."

THE OUT-OF-DATES — ***By Frank H. Shaw***

"A sailing-ship man I've lived; a sailing-ship man I'll die, please God," says old *Captain Brookes* of the windjammer *Good Hope*. But when, in spite of his desire, fate places him in charge of a steam-vessel, he welcomes the chance to show that two seamen of the old school make a better crew than a full complement of up-to-date steam sailors.

THE GATE THROUGH THE MOUNTAIN Conclusion — ***By Hugh Pendexter***

With the Kiowas under *Satanta* and the bandits under "*Gentleman Ralph*" allied against him, "*Uncle Dick*" *Wooton* decides that the only way to solve the mystery in which he has become entangled is to fight.

JUST FINDING THE GOLD — ***By Kathrene and Robert Pinkerton***

"You'll die in a shack! You'll die in a shack!" This prophecy, repeated from many quarters, drives "*Gold-Bug Jimmie's*" partners into the northern wilderness on a long, strange quest, and drives *Jimmie* himself upon a quest that is longer and stranger. And the questing is not for pay-dirt.

Missing Page

Inside back cover

They Satisfy

No smoke is so good as a combination of fine Turkish and Domestic tobaccos rightly chosen when these tobaccos are blended in the exclusive Chesterfield way.

They Satisfy **Chesterfield**

CIGARETTES

And the blend can't be copied.